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SERMONS

BY

RICHARD FULLER, D.D.

PREACHED DURING HIS MINISTRY WITH THE SEVENTH AND EUTAW PLACE BAPTIST CHURCHES, BALTIMORE, 1847—1876.

PREPARED BY HIMSELF.

"Quisquis hæc legit, ubi pariter, certus est, pergat mecum; ubi pariter hæsitat, quærat mecum; ubi errorem suum cognoscit, redeat ad me; ubi meum, revocet me."—St. Augustine, de Trin. i. 5.

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PREFACE.

THE following Sermons are published in accordance with the dying request of their lamented author. Several years before his decease, Dr. Fuller prepared them for publication with especial care. Correcting his original notes, they were then placed in the hands of a friend to be copied. The copy was subsequently revised; and so thoroughly was the work done that when the manuscripts were opened, they were found to be in complete readiness for the press.

Posthumous discourses of eminent ministers are often given to the world. But these are generally selected by surviving friends from such imperfect materials as may be accessible. In this case we have those which the author himself designated for publication, and which received his final review. It is quite unusual for Pastors, amid the demands of their engrossing work, to prepare discourses to be read after they have ceased to speak. That two such volumes as are now presented to the public should be furnished by Dr. Fuller, is a witness both to his industry and his zeal in the service of Jesus.

It is probable that these Sermons are published nearly as they were delivered. It was the author's habit in preaching to have every important thought carefully premeditated. Not unfrequently he employed the very words which had been prearranged. Many will recognize in these glowing pages expressions often heard from the living voice. The language will serve to recall the tone, the features, the very gesture of the beloved speaker, though the eloquent tongue is silent; and impressions, partially effaced by time, will be revived. Others, who

did not enjoy the benefit of his personal ministry, will find in the lucid statement, the pathetic appeal, the Scriptural exposition, the fervent rhetoric and the heavenly unction which abound in these discourses, an ample explanation of his commanding power in the pulpit.

It is an occasion of profound gratitude to God that though the majestic form which went in and out among us is in ruins, and the tones which so often stirred our hearts are hushed, these precious truths he spoke, selected and reviewed by himself, remain for our profit and delight. As these Sermons proved the power of God unto salvation unto many who heard them, God grant that they may conduce to the spiritual good of all who may read them.

W. T. B.

Baltimore, July, 1877.

DEDICATION.

I DEDICATE these Discourses to "all them that love our LORD JESUS CHRIST in sincerity;" and especially to the Churches in Baltimore over which I have been pastor for so many laborious but happy years. To the deacons and members of these Churches I would say, Here is my "endeavor that ye may be able, after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance."

RICHARD FULLER.

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Sermon First.

THE GOSPEL NOT A PHILOSOPHY, BUT A REVELATION.

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."—I Cor. 2: 9-10.

AFTER the confession which Scott, Chalmers and others have left as to their early ministry, there can be no uncharitableness in fearing that there are multitudes who would be shocked if they were charged with infidelity, who devoutly read the Scriptures every day and never doubt their truth, but who yet do not believe these Scriptures; that many are very zealous and eloquent in preaching about religion, who are themselves utterly ignorant of the religion of the Gospel, and of the faith, the peace, the joy of that Gospel.

A man depressed by deep habitual melancholy applied to a physician in London to know what could relieve him from this settled gloom. His medical adviser counselled him to go and hear a celebrated actor who was every night convulsing crowds with mirth. "Alas," replied the patient, "I am myself that actor." If, as we are told, the actor can teach the preacher, it is only where the preacher is an actor; but the confession of this comedian may well bring us all to serious thought. For something like this may be going on in other matters than the drama, on other boards besides the stage. In religion; in a church where Sabbath after Sabbath there are finished compositions in the pulpit and reverent audiences in the pews; all may be, on one part, only a theatrical exhibition, and on the other part only an imposing spectacle—a most deceitful illusion.

Baffled, humbled, instructed by the failure of his philosophical dissertations at Athens, Paul visited Corinth, with a fixed purpose "not to know anything but Jesus Christ and him crucified;" and you remember how rich was the harvest he there reaped. The fame of his eloquence, of his powers of reasoning and of his new doctrines, had probably preceded him, as Corinth was not far from Athens; but his conceited and fastidious hearers were disappointed in the subject to which he scrupulously adhered. Christ crucified was foolishness to these Greeks, who sought after questions of human wisdom. In this chapter the apostle vindicates his course; declaring that the doctrines of the Gospel are not theories of human discovery, nor theses for human speculation, but truths revealed directly by the Spirit; truths not to be established by reasoning, by "the excellency of speech or of wisdom," but truths resting where a true religion must rest—upon "the testimony of God." The text is often quoted, as if it referred to the invisible glories of heaven; this is a palpable mistake, for the things here spoken of have been revealed. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."

I. The disclosures of the Gospel are the things indicated in the passage before us. And, entering at once into the subject, I remark, that Christianity is not a complement of natural religion, not a new phase, a perfect developement of truths partially known before, but a distinct message, a peculiar interposition, a direct communication from God, of things entirely novel. It is news, "glad tidings of great joy," sent immediately from heaven to earth. It is intelligence confirmed by the divine veracity, and therefore announced dogmatically to the recipiency of faith.

Let me not be misunderstood. Far be it from me to unite with those who depreciate the knowledge which is derived from nature. Philosophy having attempted to set the works of God against his word, to exalt nature by detracting from the glory of revelation, orthodoxy has

taken the alarm and gone to the other extreme, seeking to extol the Bible by degrading reason and nature. At any time, but especially in this age of bold, restless scientific investigation, such advocacy is most damaging to the cause of truth. The Gospel does not contradict nor supersede nature; it recognizes, it requires, much that is natural to man, and without which a revelation would be impossible.

What are the sacred oracles?—they are a compilation of inspired words. Are these words found first in this book? Certainly not; they had been in common use long before they were adopted as vehicles of heavenly truth. In speaking to you, I must employ terms which you understand; and in giving us a revelation, God must address us in a language and by images to which we are accustomed; otherwise there can be no communication. As I make this statement, it seems to you self-evident; yet in polemical controversies it is overlooked, and we are gravely told that, in imparting his instructions, Jesus sometimes used phrases not in the ordinary vernacular sense, but with a new, cabalistic, theological signification.

Nor is revelation dependent upon nature only for the medium by which it must be conveyed; it supposes much knowledge which is derived from nature. Around every man now born, the old creation lies fresh and new, just as it lay around the first man; and this creation is the volume from which we receive our earliest impressions. Long before we can read the inspired page, other pages are unfolded to our senses and minds; and from these we obtain information, which is not only necessary to our existence, but is indispensable, if we are to attach any meaning to the language of the Bible.

Our text recognizes the senses as avenues of important knowledges, and the mind (for this is the import of the phrase rendered "the heart of man") as an endowment which achieves sublime triumphs in science and wisdom. The eyes see. Upon these exquisitely delicate orbs are pencilled all the loveliness of the earth by day and all the starry glories of the heavens by night. The ears hear.—Notes of joy, of sorrow, of pain, of pleasure, the cries of fear, the tender accents of friendship, harsh discords and

sweet, soft harmonies, penetrate these vocal chambers.—Then, too, how much "enters into the mind of man;" the intellect with its far-reaching thoughts, overstepping the grave and wandering into eternity; the conscience with its clear light and severe authority; the fancy with its exhaustless creations; memory expatiating through all the past; hope gilding all the future; faith, love, that inward sense of beauty, truth, purity, which instinctively discovers the true and good and beautiful around us,—these, all these, are faculties of the human mind, and they teach us much, they speak to us with a voice more potent than that of any outward monitor.

We dishonor God, we repudiate the Bible, when we debase one department of knowledge for the purpose of recommending another; when we either deny that nature teaches anything, or admit that there is any discrepancy between works proceeding from the same divine Author. Nature is the oldest revelation we have of God, manifesting many "invisible things of him;" but nature is not the revelation required for such a being as man.

There is a principle in our constitution which, I believe would have rendered a special interposition by God necessary, even if man had never fallen. Familiarity soon produces indifference. The uniformity, the monotony of Nature would have made us insensible to her teachings. But man is plainly a fallen being. He is self-absorbed and absorbed by the earth; and if he is to be recalled to a sense of his true duty, dignity, destiny, he must have a teacher more rousing and urgent than Nature. Enveloped in the senses and passions, he wishes not to be disturbed, and easily closes his ear to tones reserved and gentle. His attention must be arrested by a voice direct, loud, striking, which will compel him to listen.

I will not however insist upon this point. The doctrine of the text which I wish to impress upon you is, that the annunciations of the Gospel are truths entirely different from everything which our senses or our intellects ever discovered; that they are a pure, direct revelation made by the Holy Spirit. Philosophy, falsely so called, has pretended that the idea of a revelation from

God is unnatural; and we grow up with I know not what lurking scepticism as to a fact without which our preaching is presumption and your hearing is folly. But this is only another proof of our blindness and degeneracy.—To unperverted reason, it seems not only probable, but almost certain, that some information would come to us directly from heaven.

God is our Father; he is not an architect who has fashioned us, and then forsaken the work of his hands; he is our Father. Is it strange that a parent should have intercourse with his children? God is "the Father of our spirits." Compared with him and our relations to him, all other beings—those united to us by the closest ties—are strangers and foreigners; is it unreasonable that he should communicate to us messages of love and counsels of paternal wisdom? In accents of piercing tenderness he summons the universe to rise up in horror at the hideous phenomenon presented in our apostasy from him. "Hear, O heavens, and be astonished O earth, for I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." Would it be less monstrous that he should abandon us?

Another thought. We feel that we are immortal, and within us are irrepressible longings to know something about that immortality. On every side we are surrounded by that great mystery, death. Multitudes whom we once knew, some of them dearer to us than life, have disappeared from this scene of action. Where, what are they now? To-morrow, we too must enter upon that interminable existence. Where, what shall we be? Compared with these questions, all other enquiries, all other investigations are perfectly insignificant. We yearn to know something of the life beyond the grave; but the senses, reason, science, experience, afford not a single glimpse of the unseen world. Is it incredible that the Eternal Father should vouchsafe us the knowledge which so unspeakably concerns us, and for which he has implanted in our souls such inextinguishable desires?

Add, too, that by the communion of a parent's mind with the minds of his children, the ties between them are drawn closer; reverence, gratitude, love are awakened

and nourished in the hearts of the family. If we could gather from nature the knowledge we need, especially on such subjects as sin and salvation from sin, God would not be throned in our affections as "the Father of lights." Instead of ascending to him in humble, adoring docility, our thoughts would turn proudly and self-complacently towards another teacher, from whom, by our own researches, we had extorted that tuition which an unnatural father had refused to give us. I rejoice that between God and the human race there exist the affinities and sympathies which spring up between the teacher and the taught; that the Divine Mind acts directly upon our minds, and thus begins and carries on the education which is to regenerate and invigorate our moral nature now, and to prepare us for life and immortality beyond the tomb.

The religion of Jesus does not depreciate nature. It recognizes man's rational faculties and honors the important knowledge they teach. Still the Gospel is not an advance in natural religion, not an ampler supplement of things which the senses and intellect had imperfectly disclosed. It is a direct, original revelation of things which "eye had never seen, nor ear heard, neither had entered into the heart of man." This is our first proposition.

II. I pass now to our second article, and affirm that the truths of the Gospel are not only things of which Nature had given no previous intimation, but things as to which Nature never could have conceived any sort of presentiment.

I have said that reason would teach us to expect a revelation from God; but in the light of the Gospel all the anticipations of reason were and must ever have been so many imbecilities; just as a candle becomes ridiculous when the sun rises. We cannot open the New Testament without confessing the truth of this assertion. We find there, it is true, a religion which so commends itself to our conscious necessities, so wonderfully meets our deepest, most essential wants, so interprets and satisfies all the articulate, prophetic longings of the soul, that it carries

along with it self-authenticating credentials; but its communications entirely transcend the discoveries which our senses or our reason ever could have made.

The senses are organs of surpassing, of divine workmanship, and how vast the knowledge which they can impart. By them I may explore the whole field of nature, may riot in all the charms of the landscape, in all the pomp and majesty of the azure firmament and the sparkling canopy. Through them I can take in strains of thrilling, enrapturing music. But where, in all the exuberant brilliancy of the magnificent panorama, can I find a single ray of light to guide my feet in the way of salvation? O, this is the knowledge I want, I must have. All sublunary interests sink into contempt, when compared with the interests of the undying spirit. But as to these Nature is entirely mute; not a faint whisper comes to me from the waving forest, not a murmur breathes from the solemn groves, not a solitary beam shines in the nightly empyrean fires, or in the streaming splendors of the orb of day. The voices of Nature—snowy summits, smiling valleys, tossing seas, flowing rivers, gushing fountains, the teeming earth, the spangled skies—lisp not a single syllable. Vainly do I investigate creation, vainly question the universe. "Day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night sheweth knowledge." There are visible melodies, silent but ravishing harmonies, the unfading anthems of sun, moon, stars—which have for ages been appealing to the population of this globe. "There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." Very marvellous was the gift of tongues on the day of Pentecost, when the pilgrims from different lands heard the Apostles "speak in their own tongues the wonderful works of God and were amazed." But far more wonderful is that power of utterance with which these old preachers, ordained at the creation, have, from their pulpit in the skies, been incessantly proclaiming the glory of God in a language vernacular to our common humanity. These teachers, however, know nothing, say nothing, can know nothing, never can say anything of that salvation from sin which is the one great necessity to man.

Our text refers to faculties nobler than the senses, but it exalts Revelation high above this imperial endowment. The distinction which the Apostle makes is strictly metaphysical. We do not acquire all our knowledge by interrogating and interpreting the material world around us. The mind is enriched from itself. The elements of its growth and perfection are not wholly exotic. There lies in us a deep, mysterious, infinite love of truth, beauty, purity. It is by its own native light that the soul discerns what is morally lovely and perfect. But, now, amidst all the intuitions of the mind, the inductions of reason, the fantastic soarings of imagination, the glowing dreams and visions of the human spirit, could there ever have been discovered an answer to the question—"What must I do to be saved?"

Man is guilty. He carries the consciousness of sin within him. He feels, too, instinctively, that sin is the great, the only real evil; that poverty, pain, disease, all other calamities, are not to be compared with wrong doing. But what can all the speculations of metaphysics, all the exploits of science do to appease the cries of an accusing conscience? The consequences of sin are not exhausted in this world. No matter though existence be to me only a dreary waste, death will open a door of escape; let the springs of life be for me all poisoned, a morrow is coming to set me free; but the misery of sin will pursue us into eternity, and be perfected and perpetuated there. After death comes the judgment; and it is the certainty of that judgment which lends such terrible energy to the conscience. How can I meet this awful responsibility? how may I prepare for that dread tribunal? I ask the earth, I adjure the skies, I torment the depths of nature and of my own unaided thoughts; but they give—they can give me no reply.

Again, man is unholy. Here is another profound and pressing want which no researches of reason could ever have supplied. Here is an evil not foreign nor accidental, but universal and at the very core of our being. Within the blight works, and all groan under it. How can this painful consciousness be relieved? No enquiry can be

more intensely important, yet none more completely baffles all our thoughts.

I will only add, that man is alienated from God; and until he is reconciled to the source of all light and holiness, he must be restless, unsatisfied, forever lost. Like the Prodigal, humanity has wandered far away from Him who is its only home, the true centre of its life and homage. But in all its aberrations it carries a dim sense of its original happiness; and turns, with mysterious, and at times yearning memories, to all it has lost. Vainly does it "join itself" to earthly objects, and seek with these to slake its "thirst for God." Without him, the soul will pine and perish with inward, central famine. Its capacities, its necessities cry out for God, for the living God. And this fact alone is enough to make us feel that a revelation was necessary,—this fact, that humanity was painfully conscious of its separation from God, that its most authentic, earnest longing is for God, and that to interpret this phenomenon, and meet this want, no beam of light or hope ever could have dawned upon the uninspired mind of man.

III. Up to this point, I have been speaking generally of the Gospel and its preternatural disclosures; let us now come closer to "the things" of which our Apostle treats. A glance at one or two of these mysteries of godliness, is all which the time allows; but the most cursory view will show how infinitely they transcend all unaided human—nay, angelic conceptions. It is with reference to the scheme of redemption, the masterpiece of the divine counsels, God admonishes us so emphatically, that "his thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are his ways our ways," that to receive the Gospel, not only must "the wicked forsake his ways," but "the unrighteous must *forsake his thoughts*." And with reason; for the truths unfolded in that Gospel are "things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man."

Of these "deep things" which God hath revealed unto us by his Spirit, let us take, first, the *Wisdom* displayed in the plan of redemption.

Look where we will, we behold surpassing wisdom in the material creation. What beauty, what variety, what order, what fitness of everything to its end. "He hath made every thing beautiful in his time." "O Lord, how manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou ordained them all." So, too, in the machinery of providence, what unfathomable skill. Who by searching can find out all those pre-adjusted harmonies by which the greatest miracles are constantly wrought but by general laws so controlling and modifying each other, that no miracle is necessary. In a word, how incomprehensible is the wisdom of a Being who knows perfectly all the properties of matter, all the attributes of spirit; who regulates uncounted myriads of worlds, everywhere diffusing happiness and securing perfect order; who is the fountain of all knowledge and wisdom to angel and archangel, to all the hosts of lofty intelligences that crowd the teeming universe.

But wonderful as is this wisdom, it is still only the perfection of a genius, some vestiges of which are found in man. The wisdom displayed in salvation is unique, peculiar; it differs entirely from every thing which the senses or the highest intellect could have gathered from the world of nature without, or the world of thought within. Not a trace of any thing like it ever could have been detected in all the eye ever could have seen, or the ear ever could have heard, or that ever could have entered into the heart of man. Imagination, in its most imperial range, could never have anticipated one single feature of such a scheme. It is a pure revelation made by "the Spirit of God which searcheth the deep things of God," and which has access directly to the spirit of man. And not only does no glimmer of earthly radiance mingle with this light from heaven, but the light is generally obscured by smoke when mere earthly fires are brought to shine upon it.

"The Greeks seek after wisdom," says our Apostle; but to them, "Christ crucified is foolishness." Degraded as Greece was at the time of Paul's visit, there yet survived some of the old enthusiasm for all noble achievements in literature and science; and a highly educated inhabitant of Athens or Corinth, had the finest suscepti-

a signal anomaly which provides full salvation for the vilest, and, at the same time, not only asserts the honor of the divine law, but magnifies that law, sheds new and amazing lustre on its august purity and inviolability. This is *the wisdom* of God; the distinguishing glory of the eternal mind, and to this the Apostle expressly alludes in the context: "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect, yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world that come to nought; but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory; which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." Here is wisdom, "the manifold wisdom of God," which principalities and powers in heavenly places desire to look into. Our Apostle declares that Christ is not only the wisdom of God, but "the power of God," and what I have just been saying applies equally to this attribute.

Unthinking men do not perceive the difficulties which seemed to render our salvation impossible; and many who profess to receive the Gospel, regard it as a revelation in which the divine mercy is the foundation of hope. But a devout mind at once perceives that if man be saved, it must be by justice as well as by mercy. This, in fact, is the great defect of all human systems that they overlook God's moral government, and make no reparation to the violated majesty of his law. When Dr. Duff asked a learned Mohammedan convert, what was the cardinal deficiency in the religion of the Koran, and that which he felt the Gospel supplied, the answer was full of instruction. "Mohammedanism is full of the mercy of God. While I had no real consciousness of inward guilt as a breaker of God's law, this satisfied me. But when I felt myself guilty before God, a transgressor of his law, I felt, also, that it was not with God's mercy, but with God's justice I had first to do. How to meet the claims

of God's justice, Mohammedanism has made no provision, but this is the very thing which I have found fully accomplished by the atoning sacrifice of Christ and his cross. And, therefore, Christianity is now the only adequate religion for me a guilty sinner." And this was the experience of the Apostle Paul. It is as the most wonderful display of power, that his grand mind glories in the Gospel. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation;" power over the powerful; power where all else is powerless; power where, to human reason, omnipotence itself seemed impotent.

We cannot glance at the works of God, nor reflect upon his nature, without being overwhelmed at the thought of his almightiness. Apply here the train of argument which we just now pursued as to his wisdom. Study God's omnipotence in the variety, the magnificence of creation; worlds upon worlds, suns upon suns, systems upon systems; all formed, garnished, peopled with life; and all this by the breath of his nostrils. "He spake and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast." And this potency is, of course, infinite; for the very idea of a creative being comprehends the idea of a being whose will is self-efficient, and who can multiply creations at his sovereign pleasure. It is self-evident, that he who can create a man, can create myriads of men; and that he who can create a man, can create an angel or myriads of angels. God has but to will, and on earth, in heaven, in hell, over the entire universe, all things are controlled by an impulse as direct and irresistible as that communicated by my will to the nerves by which I thus open and shut my hand.

But, while the mechanism of creation thus attests the "thunder of God's power," still it is power which "the eye sees, the ear hears, and which enters into the heart of man." The power, like the wisdom, manifested in the Gospel, is one of those "things" as to which neither observation nor science could have given any sort of idea.—In the salvation of sinners God achieves what, to human judgment and experience, seemed wholly impossible.—You may ask, Can any thing be impossible to God?—

I answer, Yes. "God cannot lie," he cannot contradict himself.

He is omnipotent when anything is the object of power; but some things are not the objects of power: and in redemption things are accomplished which, to finite minds, are quite beyond the sphere of any power. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" How can a guilty creature be delivered, not only from punishment, but from guilt—so that he can exclaim, "Who shall lay any thing to my charge?" A criminal may be pardoned; but then he is only absolved from the claims which justice had upon him. Here is one covered by sin, who yet challenges the law, the judge, the universe, and boldly defies any accusation. Nay, this transgressor is not only rescued from his guilt, but he is justified; and—while angels veil their faces and "cry, Unclean"—he appears before the inspection of Omniscience clothed in a perfect righteousness, he stands calm, serene, rejoicing amidst the awful splendors of that countenance from which the heavens and the earth flee away.

To human reason, these assertions seem like contradictions; we would have pronounced them (the Greeks did esteem them) "foolishness." But in the great propitiatory sacrifice, the power of God has gloriously harmonized these anomalies, and solved the problem by which God can be just, and justify the ungodly. "I have glorified thee upon the earth!" Ponder the eternity of meaning crowded into these few words. Here, upon this earth, God had been dishonored; nor could any created being render satisfaction for the insult to infinite majesty and holiness. On this earth, an amazing reparation is made. Here, on the very spot where guilty rebels had outraged divine justice, that justice is satisfied, and at the same time mercy flows like an ocean for the guiltiest rebel. Here is power; "the exceeding greatness of his power." "I have glorifi d thee upon the earth." By man God has been disparaged; by man God is glorified; by a man—but what a Man! what a phenomenon! the "Brightness of the Father's glory" eclipsed in poverty, sorrow, shame, darkness; the Celestial Beatitude torn by cruel anguish; the Lord of life and glory expiring upon

a cross, while men and angels look on with amazement and tears.

I might thus speak of the pomp and glory of all the divine perfections as disclosed in the Gospel, but I will mention only one more. I mean the love of God. It is above all, the love of God in Christ Jesus which passeth knowledge; which, in tenderness, in intensity, transcendently surpasses all that "eye had ever seen or ear heard, or had entered into the heart of man."

It is very common to hear people speak of God's mercy, as a truth taught us by nature, but this is a great mistake; nature utters not one syllable as to this great attribute. In the economy of nature there is, positively, no mercy. If a natural law be violated, the penalty is enforced with inexorable severity. All around me I behold proofs of the goodness of God, but they are, at times, mingled with tokens which would bewilder and terrify my unassisted reason. If in the green and fruitful earth, in the sunshine, in the firmament all fretted with golden fires, I see a God who is good; what do I see in the lightning, the tempest, the shipwreck, the earthquake? If in life, health, prosperity, I learn the benevolence of God; what do I learn in disease, famine, death? in those strokes which break the heart, in the pestilence which spreads desolation and terror over a whole land? It is only in the Sacred Volume, that these enigmas find any explanation. There, we are assured that "God is love," and that if there be misery and death, they are the baneful effects of sin.

All this, however, is not what our text declares. The love displayed in the Gospel, is *mercy to sinners.* Of this nature gives, can give no intimation whatever, and reason can only form conjectures vague and perplexing.—Perish the cold revolting philosophy which excludes God from the immediate government of the earth,—the mechanical religion which regards him as an artist who has constructed an ingenious piece of machinery, and then abandoned it to its own forces. This theory would forever extinguish all hope of man's recovery. But equally false is the romantic religion which strips God of his moral attributes; and makes him a weak, poetical, senti-

mental deity. "Truth," as well as "Grace," "came by Jesus Christ." The Bible is a disclosure of amazing mercy; but a disclosure which causes us to exclaim, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayst be feared." This revelation of mercy is the great thing in the Gospel, it is the Gospel, the "glad tidings of great joy." Salvation by the atonement is not only "a faithful saying," but it is "worthy of all acceptation." It is so precisely adapted to the wants of the soul, it so commends itself at once to a mind enlightened by the Holy Spirit, that if you can suppose such a mind to have found this truth among the records dug up from the ruins of some long buried city, though nothing else might be discovered as to the history of that perished population, this fragment of their faith would render it certain that they had received their religion directly from heaven.—And yet so strange and wonderful, and immeasurably above all which imagination ever took in during her widest excursions, is the love of God in Christ Jesus, that, now, here, in the meridian of Christian knowledge, the natural man receiveth it not, for it is foolishness to him, because it is spiritally discerned.

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." Enter into these truths. What things are these! What a style of love is this! And when we consider the sins which are all pardoned through the immolation of this adorable victim; and the intimacies to which God now welcomes such rebels; and the tender care with which he guards them; and the glory to which he will exalt them in eternity,—O, my brethren, after this, let us confess that we have been mistaken, when we called the most devoted earthly attachment by that sacred term 'Love.' No. God alone knows what love is. Only in his heart burns this celestial energy. "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins." "*Herein is love.*" Yes, fathers, mothers, ye Davids, ye Rachels, whose souls yearn over your children; ye who suffer a thousand pangs, when one is in-

flicted upon those so tenderly allied to you; who would woo death, and hug it to your embrace if you could but die for those so precious to you; parents, fathers, mothers, after all, you deceive yourselves; you do not love; you do not comprehend what love means. God is love. God only can love. And the Gospel is the revelation of this love; love which is not a weakness, a blind effeminate attachment overlooking the guilt of its object; but love holy, righteous, uncompromising in its abhorrence of sin; and yet rescuing the lost and ruined by an interposition before which reason is staggered, imagination recoils, and faith can only wonder, admire, weep, rejoice, adore.

IV. Having shown you that the Gospel is not a developement of natural religion, but a direct communication from God,—a revelation of things as to which nature and reason never gave and never could have given any information, I ought now to dwell upon the fact that the treasures of the Gospel are God's provision for all who love him. But lest I weary you, I abridge the matter, and simply repeat, with a word of comment, the declaration in the text—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which *God hath prepared for them that love him*; but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."

A preparation made from eternity. Impious is any system which represents God as having been surprised and defeated by the unexpected entrance of sin into the world. God's purposes cannot be of recent date. Nothing is plainer in Revelation than that the Gospel is "the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory;" and that, by the redemption which is in Jesus, even the existence of moral evil– that dark mystery —is overruled, so as toreflect amazing splendor upon all the divine perfections and at the same time to exalt those who are saved from among men to an immortality of surpassing blessedness and glory. This is a truth at which, as the text intimates, human pride and reason will cavil; but which will cause the devout mind to exclaim, "Touching the Almighty we cannot find him out; his judgments

are a great deep; he doeth great things and unsearchable, marvellous things without number. How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out."

A preparation most abundant. Our Apostle declares that it is "exceeding abundant;" "the exceeding riches of his grace and kindness towards us through Christ Jesus." It is compared not only to a feast supplying all our wants, but to a royal banquet, the magnificence and munificence of which dazzle the eye, and mock to scorn the highest anticipations of the beggars who are the guests. When, my friends, when will man believe God, and know that "all things are now ready?" When will Christians believe the Bible, and have done with all thought of merit, and know that we are complete in Christ "who of God is made to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

A preparation offered freely to all. For whom hath God provided the blessings of the Gospel? For the learned? the moral? the righteous? No, but for those "who love him." If you hate God, if you prefer sin to the riches he offers you, vainly do I plead with you.—Without love, you can have no relish for the "things prepared;" and if admitted to the marriage supper of the saints in heaven, there would be nothing in all that festival of purity and love to regale one taste or appetite of your soul. But if you love God, if the love of Christ draws you to him, these "things" are prepared for you; they are suited to your wants; they are yours to enjoy freely now and forever. Why are you a stranger, an exile, not at home in your own Father's house? Why are you not now rejoicing with the best ring on your finger, your rags exchanged for the best robe, your hunger feeding upon the richest dainties, and earth and heaven exulting over your return?

I will only add that, as this preparation is from eternity, so it is for eternity. This is the great concern to an immortal being. With what contempt does Jesus regard the body, the whole world, when compared with the soul's redemption. It is the future that makes man noble. Yonder I shall be great, mingling—myself their peer—with glorious kings and resplendent immortals.—

The soul alone has real grandeur. The inevitable momentous crisis approaches, when we must surrender all that is mortal. It is the immortal principle, which is the real man, which will then pass into a life of amazing intensity and activity. Beings situated as we are ought habitually to feel that they have much more to do with eternity than with time, with heaven than with earth.—And for that eternity, that heaven, what glorious prospects are unveiled by the Gospel. For those who love him, God hath prepared things so ravishing that inspiration exhausts all language, all imagery, when seeking to convey to our faith some glimpses of "what we shall be."—Paul was caught up into the third heaven; his eye saw, his ear heard the extasies of the redeemed; his heart took in some conceptions of those beatific raptures. But when he returns to earth, and we gather around him and ask him to tell us something of that state towards which all our thoughts, prayers, aspirations, longings, so earnestly tend, he disappoints us, he puts his finger upon his lips, he declares that "it is not lawful" (not possible with our material organization) to describe such things. He only exclaims in a sort of sacred, inexplicable rhapsody, "Glory." "Exceeding glory." "More exceeding glory." "Far more exceeding glory." "Far more exceeding and eternal glory." "Far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!"

And while God hath prepared such things for them that love him, he is preparing those who love him for these things. The whole of a Christian's life is an education for heaven. Reason, experience, flesh and blood, will mutiny at things which God prescribes as parts of this necessary discipline; but love can comprehend what love does, or it can trust where it cannot trace. Hence it is said, "We *know* that all things work together for good to them that love God." We do not see that all things work together for our good, but we *know* it; know it because we love God; because our love to God is only a repercussion of the love wherewith "he first loved us;" because "every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God;" because as the text intimates, the hidden things of God are understood only by those who love

him; because, with an inspiration deeper than that of prophets, with a vision more gifted than that of seers, love, sweet confiding, luminous love knows how to interpret all the mysteries of faith, all the obscurities of providence, and in all thankfully to acknowledge the wisdom and love of a Father who is making us "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

In conclusion, let me again remind you that the Gospel is not a system of philosophy or morality or theology submitted to our judgments, but a religion, "the testimony of God," addressed to our faith. And now, can anything be more preposterous than the objections we sometimes hear to the mysteries of such a revelation?—I at once admit that no evidence could prove a religion to come from God, if it contained contradictions; but there is no contradiction in any doctrine of the Bible.—Nay, it is folly in us to pretend that we can detect such contradictions, for this supposes that we fully comprehend the divine mind and essence. There is no truth in the natural world which does not involve mysteries; and if nature reserves much, if she has secrets she will not yield to our most earnest importunities, can we expect religion to reveal all her mysteries at once? The truths of the Gospel are clearly announced. To demand that nothing shall be withheld, is to forget that "secret things belong unto the Lord;" and that "it is the glory of God to conceal a thing;" it is to pretend that we have claims upon Jehovah which he is bound to satisfy; it is, in short, to neglect plain duty, and ruin ourselves forever, because God will not do for us more than he has done for unfallen angels—because he will not perform what is absolutely impossible.

Have done with this folly and impiety, my dear friend, The Gospel is good news; rejoice in these glad tidings of great joy; adore the riches of mercy which are this day unfolded to you. "The things which are revealed belong to you." God hath prepared them for those that love him. One day we shall pass to an economy of light. Now we "know in part, we prophesy in part;" but let us not love in part. In heaven we shall be "saints in light;" here we are to be saints in love. Instead of

wasting the few hours of life which are left us in vain discussions, let us love God, let us consecrate our hearts to such a Redeemer. This is religion—"Though I understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and have not love, I am nothing." This is peace, happiness, the assurance and foretaste of heaven. This comes from God and must conduct to him.

Christians, my beloved brethren, what emotions ought not this subject to awaken in your bosoms. The opening of the seventh seal caused silence in heaven for half an hour; the loosing the seals of the Gospel has broken the silence that brooded over eternity. To others our theme may be invested with no charms; but to you it is full of unspeakable sublimity and glory. The preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. You know that faith is something more than the conviction of the intellect; that until love opens our eyes, the things of the Gospel are hidden from us; that it is love which comprehends, feels, rejoices in the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Let me beseech you to make these things the subject of adoring study and meditation. Can there be a more substantial mortification than this, that we are constantly reading the Bible, and yet know so little of the wonders of redemption? These pages are called "Oracles," because they are a direct revelation of God's mind; "living oracles" because they breathe life into the soul. "The words that I speak unto you," said Jesus, "they are spirit and they are life." Supplicate earnestly the light of that Spirit who reveals these things unto us—that he may "receive of the things of Christ and show them unto you." Make the prayer of the Psalmist yours, "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law!"

And seek to grow in love, to be made perfect in love. It is to love that God reveals himself; for love alone can comprehend love; and God is love. It is by love that the spiritual eye is couched to discern the truths of the Gospel. It is love which initiates us into the mysteries of the Cross. He who knows not this is in great darkness; the highest truth has not dawned upon him. No

earthly illumination could cause the fabled statue to give out its strange, glorious music; it was mute until beams fell upon it from the sun himself. And before the soul can sing the New Song, its eternal harmonies must be awakened by the touch of celestial love. Love, sincere, meek, humble, obedient love gives not only heat, but light. A simple, loving, tender heart has ever a clear eye; it is endowed with a sympathy, an intuition surer than all the deductions of the intellect. Such a heart the Holy Spirit delights to lead into the innermost shrine of truth, into the holiest of holies; and there to reveal to it the secret of the Lord; to pour into it light which is felt to be light from heaven; so to unveil the majesty, the glory, the sweetness of the Gospel that the soul runs over with its fullness.

My beloved hearers, may we know this love, this luminous all revealing love; and may it enrich us with these unspeakable blessings. "And this I pray that, your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment." "Wherefore I also after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe according to the working of his mighty power."

What noble, what heaven-inspired petitions are these! God grant that we may experience their fulfilment in our own souls. To him be glory and dominion, forever and ever. AMEN.

Sermon Second.

THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM.

"And lo, the star which they saw in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was."—MATT. 2: 9.

WHAT a profound mystery is the Incarnation.—"Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh." And the temper that becomes us with reference to this amazing phenomenon is, not vain curiosity, but the adoring reverence which turns aside to behold this great sight, and to worship "Emmanuel, God with us." He would be an idiot who to aid the sun by day or to supply his place by night,—should hold a candle over a dial. Greater, if possible, is the folly which, upon such a subject, seeks to employ human reason any farther than we have the light of revelation.

The star in the East was an emblem of that Gospel which, coming from heaven, is "a light shining in a dark place" to guide us to the Redeemer of our souls. The treatment which the Gospel receives is strikingly illustrated by the conduct of Herod, the priests, and the Magi; and it is this last thought which shall engage our attention to day. First, however, let us glance at the narrative itself.

I. The narrative. "Through the tender mercy of our God the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." Such was the sublime epiphany at Bethlehem; and to two very different classes this wonderful birth is miraculously revealed: to the shepherds by an angel; while for the Magi a star is the appointed missionary. We have now to do

with the latter manifestation; and some enquiries naturally arise, in reference to this brilliant light and these oriental pilgrims.

As to the star, the evangelist furnishes no sort of explanation; he simply relates the event. A luminous body attracts the attention of these scientific men. God, who has direct control over all minds, reveals to them the glorious fact, that it is the herald of the Messiah who was "the Desire of all nations;" and they are at once obedient to the heavenly vision, and follow this extraordinary guide until it stops and pours its lustre upon the lowly shed.

These venerable sages do not speculate, they obey; but learned astronomers have wished to be wise above what is written, and to explain this sidereal phenomenon. One of them discovers that, about the time of the imperial birth, there was a remarkable conjunction of three large planets, whose combined light must have shone with wonderful effulgence. Another compares this star to a strange, temporary orb which visited the heavens in the year fifteen hundred and seventy-two, burning with such brilliancy that it was visible by day as well as by night, and after some months disappearing entirely. A third apprehends that the star was a comet. A fourth—but I will not waste your time with these idle, though learned conjectures. Attempts to find natural explanations for facts which the sacred writers state as miracles, may be well intended and have an appearance of piety; in truth, however, they betray a lurking spirit of scepticism. Or, if not in the direction of infidelity, such speculations mistake the very meaning of a revelation, which is given to teach us salvation, and not to divert our minds into fields of scientific study. Even in the department of nature, true philosophy will bring the mind back from its vain researches to much of the simplicity of the peasant who takes things as they are, without seeking to penetrate to their hidden sources; but in receiving a revelation from God, the very first temper required is the docility of children.

Men and brethren, reason exercises one of her noblest powers when she determines her own limits, and

submits to a revelation coming from heaven. But this truth, however self-evident, is often overlooked. To any humble, candid man it is plain, that when the Saviour was upon earth, evil spirits were permitted to exert great power, that they might be openly condemned and defeated. Science, however,—while professing great reverence for the Scriptures—has wished to regard these demoniacal possessions as nothing more than diseases. So as to the star mentioned in our text; why seek any astronomical solution of a phenomenon plainly miraculous? It was manifestly an orb of light created for the purpose; moving not far away among the heavenly bodies, but in the atmosphere of our earth; conducting the Magians first to Palestine, then to Jerusalem, then changing its course and leading them to Bethlehem, where it paused and hung directly over the destined house. The fiery pillar which heralded Israel through the wilderness to the promised land indicated to that vast multitude what course they should pursue, when they should rest, and when resume their journey; and such was the office of the mysterious luminary which beckoned on these distinguished foreigners.

So much as to the Star. Now for the Magi. The term means men of science. It is almost certain that these men were sages among the Persians; adherents of the Zoroasterian worship in which light was adored; and that they shared in the expectations, then diffused through the East, of a great king and saviour who should be the light of the world. But here, again, let us not indulge in useless disquisitions. Once introduce fancy into religion, and there will be no end of fictions. Men say they consecrate their imaginations to piety. It reminds me of the Jews, who devoted their ornaments to God, but made a golden calf out of them. Nor are ministers only to be blamed for the fantastical conceits which too often disgrace the pulpit; they are influenced by a low taste among the people for these extravagancies. It was not the priest who first degraded the religion of heaven into idolatry.—When condemned for making the golden calf, Aaron's plea was, that he complied with the popular voice.

The foolish traditions of Rome as to these Magi are

fables suited only to the nursery. That they were monarchs, the kings of Tarshish and Sheba and Seba, who, it had been prophesied, should "offer gifts;" how they were baptized in the river Jordan; how they returned home and published the Gospel: and how, after their deaths, the city of Cologne received their remains;—these, and similar figments, are gravely recorded in the annals of superstition; but they are wholly unworthy of your attention. All we know is, that a deputation of wise men from the East visited Jerusalem under supernatural guidance. Baalam had foretold that there should "come a Star out of Jacob and a sceptre out of Israel;" and influenced, either by some knowledge of prophecy which must have been widely diffused by the Jewish captives, or, as is most probable, by direct inspiration, these venerable patriarchs leave their homes and undertake a long and perilous journey. For Ezra, with his companions, was four months in reaching Jerusalem from Persia; and the road, passing through Assyria, Mesopotamia, and Syria, would traverse toilsome mountains, vast parched plains, and dreary wildernesses.

Such, then, is the sacred narrative; and let us not turn from it without a reflection or two suggested by this history. I have adopted the common and, I believe, the correct opinion, that these Magi were men devoted to the study of the starry firmament. So absorbing is this science, that Anaxagoras became wholly dead to all earthly things; and, when asked, if he had no love for his country, pointed upwards and said, "There is my country."—Moreover, in all ages superstition has invested these rolling splendors with some inscrutable potency over human affairs. And we need not be surprised at this. Without one of these bodies—the sun—our earth would be shrouded in night, the air would stagnate, vegetation would cease, and human life perish. Why, then, the necromancer asks, may not all these orbs of living fire dispense some charm for good or evil as they wheel their mystic rounds?

Physical astronomy easily degenerated into a complicated system of judicial astrology. The fiery cope of heaven was regarded as a scroll written all over with

flaming hieroglyphics and burning revelations of the future. Nor is it improbable that this belief had taken strong hold upon the minds of these learned orientals.

But I am wandering from the subject. These Magi were astronomers; and now see how God is wont, mercifully, to meet men in their pursuits; and not only to honor their industry—as in the case of the "shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night"—but to employ their vocations as vehicles of spiritual instruction. David, tending his fold, is prepared and chosen to be a shepherd of Israel. The Samaritan woman, while drawing at the well, is reminded of "living water." The Apostles by their lines and nets are taught how to become "fishers of men." And these Magians are drawn by the science most familiar to their minds.

Observe, again, from this narrative, that the Gospel is for "every creature," that it recognizes no distinctions, either national or social, among men. The shepherds were Jews, the Magi were Gentiles. "In thee, and in thy Seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed." "And men shall be blessed in him, all nations shall call him blessed." "To him shall the gathering of the people be." The shepherds were humble and illiterate men; the Magi were men of exalted position and profound learning. Both classes, however, kneel reverently before the incarnate Redeemer. If there be any distinguishing honor conferred, it is upon the lowly shepherds, for to them this glorious revelation is first made, and—while a star is the apostle for the noble men of science—an angel from heaven kindles their souls with this wonderful message.

Above all, let this recital teach us the mingled dignity and meekness of the Saviour. Here is glory such as no mortal ever received or can receive. This is no common monarch who is born; for in Herod's dominion, and as if the reign of that prince was wholly eclipsed, the wise men enquire for "the king of the Jews." To usher them to the abode of this august sovereign, a new star is created; an orb more glorious in its ministry than all the spheres which sweep the firmament in planetary pomp and solemnity. Nor do they enter that presence only to render courtly homage; they come to "worship him."

And well may they adore, and pour their treasures before that imperial child; for soon all the heavenly host will fall at his feet, casting their crowns there and crying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." But, while such is his majesty; while the skies are strangely illuminated; while from near and from afar worshippers bow low in wonder and love; while angels leave their bright abodes and gaze, and exult, and from heavenly lyres shed heavenly music upon the listening ear of night;—with all this retinue of kingly state and divine glory—where do we find this illustrious visitant? Come see the place where he lies.

In the meanest village of Judea, in the meanest habitation of that village, in the meanest shed attached to that habitation,—there this regal guest first appears.—And the meekness and lowliness incarnate in that rude cradle unfolded themselves in all his future life. "In him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead"—a fullness of pardon and strength and peace and life, to satisfy the cravings of every weary, heavy laden soul; and he invited all to share these exhaustless treasures. But it was because he was "meek and lowly in heart," that he bade them come and find rest to their souls.

II. From the narrative I pass now, to our principal topic: marking the different conduct of those who witnessed this wonderful phenomenon, and the faithful representation we find in their conduct of the treatment which the truth now receives from those whom it seeks to enlighten and save. Follow me carefully in this examination.

I am to speak of the entertainment which the truth receives from different sorts of people; and I begin with the most odious class—that represented by Herod.

This king was called Herod the Great; and ought it not to cure us of that low ambition which seeks honor from men," when we find such a monster thus exalted? He was now in the thirty-fifth year of his reign. He was not a Jew but an Edomite, and had no legitimate title to the throne. In the midst of that wealth and splen-

dor which he had usurped, a deputation of venerable emirs visit his capital; and observe what is the object of this imposing embassy. They enquire "Where is he that is *born king of the Jews?* for we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him." A hereditary monarch; a lineal heir to the throne of David; a rival wonderfully announced by heaven and thus openly proclaimed;—the tyrant is filled with rage; and you recollect his duplicity, perfidiousness, unrelenting cruelty; I need not go into the history. I mention him only because the truth now too often meets with the same temper which rankled in the bosom of this unscrupulous and ferocious despot.

So captivating is the very name by which this incarnation of love is introduced to our world; such charms invest that word "Jesus;" so touching, subduing, divinely endearing is the mission of him who stooped to seek and to save those who were lost; that we would expect all to welcome with adoring rapture "the glad tidings of great joy." But as the very approach of the glorious deliverer awakened the bitter hostility of Herod, so now, the passions—those usurpers of God's throne in the heart—rise up against the truth; and we find in too many of those whom the Gospel addresses, the very same enmity which glowed in the soul of that relentless persecutor.

Several things are recorded of Herod. He stirred up the whole city against the truth which had been revealed. He consulted the priests, but it was only that he might gratify his evil passions. He even professed a desire to worship the marvellous child; and, flattering the Magi, requested them to inform him as soon as they had discovered the birthplace; but his pretensions were false, his purposes selfish and inhuman. In fine, when baffled in his scheme, he betrayed his real character by that horrible massacre, which at a stroke swept the nurseries of their sweetest treasures. And, though disguised, the same temper still lurks in the carnal mind; the same animosity to the truth; and all this under a professed reverence for Jesus and his religion. Nor—if unrestrained by law—would this spirit now hesitate about those deeds of blood by which persecution has always sought to accomplish its victories.

It is remarkable that the very first promise of a Saviour announced this enmity to that glorious child who should be born of a woman. "I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed." And, at an early period of his ministry, Jesus admonished his disciples against any illusion as to this matter. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. I am come not to send peace, but a sword."

On the night of that amazing birth at Bethlehem, the "Prince of Peace" entered our world; and cherub and seraph hailed the dawn of an empire in which hatred should cease and love forever reign. "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." But in Herod's breast this event at once inflames the fiercest hostility. And just so now. In itself—in its maxims, precepts, promises, spirit, influence—the Gospel breathes peace; and were it received universally, the whole world would be filled with peace and happiness. But in the depraved hearts of men it encounters only a lodged and rooted hatred.

Truth, spiritual truth as revealed by Jesus and in Jesus, who can estimate its value? It is the real treasure of the mind, the true joy of the heart; it fills the conscience with heavenly tranquility, and elevates the soul above all the follies and falsehoods of the world. Truth is so distinctively the characteristic, the very essence of Christ's religion, that he declares he came to "bear witness to the truth." To be a Christian, a man must postpone all other questions, and first ask, "What is truth?" For unless this enquiry be made first, it will never be honestly made at all.

And a Christian is bound not only to believe what he professes, but to profess and maintain and teach what he believes. Hence the enmity he will experience. "Behold this child is set for a sign which shall be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." The religion of Jesus will be hated; because it pierces the secrets of men's hearts, disturbs their security, —assailing the usurpations of custom, of honored example,

of old hereditary sanctities—compelling men to prove all things, to examine for themselves the foundations upon which they have been resting,—and thus arrays against each other those who were formerly bound by the ties of authority or kindred.

What is the first quality you desire in a friend? What? you reply; why sincerity, of course. He only is my friend, who is candid in all things, especially in those things which affect my soul and my salvation. Truth is of such infinite value, that he is my enemy who conceals it; he alone loves me who tells me the truth plainly and faithfully. Now, all this sounds very well, and you believe yourself in all this; but if your friend should take you at your word, how long would your intimacy with him continue? No, what we desire in a friend is not candor, it is flattery. The Galatians received Paul as an "angel of God," "would have plucked out their eyes and have given them to him;" but they could not endure his fidelity; and we hear him saying, "Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" Nor has it ever been, nor will it ever be otherwise in the propagation of the Gospel. How large a portion of the archives of our earth is a record of persecution levelled against the truths of the Bible. Hostility to Jesus and his precepts glares upon us from every side, whether we consider the annals of the past, or the history now enacting before our eyes. Tyrants fulminating vengeance against their subjects, priests persecuting the people with unrelenting malignity, even children arrayed against their parents, and parents against their children—such divisions the Gospel will produce when fearlessly preached. And let us, my brethren, never forget a truth predicted by the Redeemer, and exemplified in the experience of the faithful in all ages. Let us remember that wherever placed, whatever be our condition, loyalty to Jesus is impossible unless, for his sake, we are ready to endure painful alienations, to feel perhaps under the velvet, the cruel steel severing ties which have long been most dear to our hearts.

You—you sit, Sabbath after Sabbath under the ministry of the word. Remember that the commission of the

man of God is not to please you but to save you. When, then, he plainly reproves your sins, do not regard him with resentment—as Ahab regarded Elijah—and Herod John the Baptist—but listen to his faithful admonitions in the spirit in which David received the reproofs, severe but salutary, of the prophet whose voice restored to him the joys of salvation. The Pharisees persecuted Jesus and his Apostles, but garnished sepulchres in honor of the prophets whom their fathers had slain for the truth. Guard against this delusion. You admire the courage of those preachers who braved the rack and scaffold in other days; reverence, then, the same fidelity when it now forfeits your favor and incurs your displeasure, that it may rescue you from perdition.

You—you mingle and have influence in society, the society of the rich, worldly, proud, where the only fashion that passeth not away is the fashion of being damned, where the secret universal compact is, that each shall let the other go to hell as quietly and comfortably and gracefully as possible. To violate this mutual engagement, to utter a word disapproving of this contract, is to be a troublesome fellow, it shews an entire want of all good-breeding. Form no part of this fatal communion. Enter not into this inhuman, barbarous compact. As a Christian you must exert, you are exerting, some influence; let it be openly, distinctly, unreservedly for Christ and his truth. Otherwise, you not only wrong your own soul; but those whom you now seek to please must in their hearts despise you, and on their deathbeds, and in eternity, they will justly heap curses upon you for your cruel faithlessness.

Above all, the family. You are a member of a family in which the spirit of the world reigns, or in which religious prejudice and error have long been consecrated heirlooms. If you are true to truth, to your own conscience, and the souls of those whom you love, you will meet unkindness which Jesus says shall pierce you like iron entering your soul, you will bitterly experience the fulfillment of that prophetic warning, "I am not come to send peace but a sword; for I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her

mother, and the daughter in law against the mother in law, and a man's foes shall be they of his own household."

Shrink not, however from your solemn duty. Speak in love, but speak the truth, as God shall furnish auspicious moments to you. All hearts are in his hands. He will overrule all things, and you shall yet see those who at first wounded you as with a sword, blessing you and glorifying God in you for a devotion so strong, so true, so willing to suffer wrong that their souls might be enlightened and guided in the way of salvation.

Herod—those who hate and persecute the truth.—This is the first class who are marked in the history before us. The second class is composed of those who do not indeed persecute the truth, but it is only because they treat it with perfect indifference, if not with contempt. These find their type in the priests, and I now turn to them.

How infatuated, indeed, how incredible, my brethren, was the conduct of these men. For just consider, in the first place, the question which is agitating the public mind. Has the Messiah really come? Prophecies have foretold that about this period "a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son whose name shall be Emmanuel, Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God;"—has this magnificent prediction been accomplished? All the religion, all the glory, all the hopes of the nation and of these men are involved in this momentous enquiry.

In the next place, think what light these dignitaries possessed. They did not belong to the ignorant masses. They were the appointed guardians and interpreters of the Sacred Oracles; and they were familiar with the predictions which assured Israel that the glorious Messiah should appear at this time. When Herod inquired of them, they at once repeated the language of the inspired books, declaring that Bethlehem would be the birthplace of the regal offspring of David.

In fine, the admonitions on every side that the "fullness of the time had come," that the majestic epiphany was at hand—reflect upon these; all the prophecies converging to the present year; the universal expectation of the nation; the vision of Zachariah, a priest, one of them-

selves, proclaiming the immediate advent of the august Deliverer of Israel; the presence of these noble pilgrims, and the mysterious lamp which guided them on their way;—enter into these thoughts, combine them: are you not astonished at the indifference of these priests? What strange folly and stupidity theirs not to hasten at once to Bethlehem, not to solve immediately this great problem, not to be wholly absorbed in a question so deeply interesting. Instead of this, they see the Magi and hear their wonderful report, they answer the enquiries of Herod, and then dismiss the whole matter. How infatuated this apathy. What sort of people could they have been?—Cease your astonishment. These scribes and priests were a sort of people very common at that day, and very common now. They were the same sort of people who live in this age; who live in this city; whom you meet every day in your streets, in your marts, on change, in the social and domestic circle. They were the same sort of people who frequent our churches on the Sabbath; who have come into this house this morning; who are now looking me in the face, and affecting such surprise at conduct which seems to them almost incredible in others, but which they every day imitate.

Yes, my friends, the practical indifference of these Jews may well astonish you, but yours amazes me still more. The question as to their Shiloh was of vast importance to these enlightened Hebrews; but think of the inquiries which are every day pressing upon our minds and soliciting our attention. Is it indeed a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus has come into the world to save sinners? Am I every hour exposed to eternal punishment, and is salvation possible to me? How may I obtain an interest in this great salvation? What must I do to be saved? How am I to prepare to meet my God, to welcome death, to stand accepted at the judgment, to secure an immortality of blessedness and glory? What questions these; yet, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, you treat them with utter unconcern. You have time and a heart for everything else, but nothing—no warnings, no entreaties, no mercies, no judgments, no tears of Jesus who

weeps over you, of your pastor who has often wept and now weeps over you—no motives from earth or hell or heaven—can fix your attention upon these solemn and stupendous truths. These priests had the inspired volume, and were admonished of the amazing phenomenon. Well, from your very infancy the light has been all around you and within you; the knowledge they could gather was ignorance compared with that which from the cradle has been mercifully lodged in your mind. After this how can you pretend to be surprised at their conduct? And do not pass this remark hastily, for it deserves your most careful consideration.

Had I time, I would speak of that want of zeal for the truth which causes so many professed Christians to resemble these priests, who utter indeed a few pious words, but, for fear of offending Herod, practice a most unworthy and perfidious silence,—thus betraying the cause confided to them.

It is not, however, to the reserves and compromises of the church that I now refer, but to the apathy we see everywhere in the world. We constantly hear sneers cast upon the disciples of Jesus for their "*Isms;*" but our cavillers ought to know that no "Ism" is half so bigoted and deplorable as their *Indifferentism*. It is one of the most obstinate, besotted, fatal forms of sectarianism and fanaticism. It is far more hopeless than any heresy, nay, than infidelity itself. He who errs may be enlightened. He who sincerely rejects Christianity, believing it to be false, may be convinced by the mass of testimony easily furnished. But he who treats a revelation from God with cool habitual indifference, betrays a temper most insidious and incurable. Where one is lost through vice or open resistance to the truth, thousands perish through this guilty negligence. Nor is it anything but absurdity to attempt a justification of this conduct, by pleading the unhappy strifes and schisms which afflict the Gospel. Because there are different roads, will a man lie down and die, rather than enquire the right path? Because a field yields thorns and brambles, will a farmer condemn it to utter sterility? In religion, as in all things, men will differ; and these dissensions

are too often urged with violence and even fierceness, so that *controversy* has become a contaminated phrase. This you condemn, and the Gospel condemns; but, after all, do men thus contend about trifles? These angry and sinful disputes admonish you to cease from man—to search the Scriptures for yourself; but they also warn you of the vast importance of religion, and of the unspeakable folly which can look with indifference upon the only subject really worthy of an immortal being.

The last class comprises those who love the truth, honor the truth, rejoice in the guidance of the truth. For them the Star of Bethlehem is a peerless orb; it has no fellow in the firmament. To these I now gladly turn; and they, in all the characteristics of real pity, find their exact archetype in those noble missionaries of the East.

Observe the sincerity and earnestness of these Magi. Vainly for many does the truth shine with clearest lustre; their eyes are closed, or, if opened, it is only that they may be shut again, and exclude the unwelcome light; they are not in earnest and sincere; vain reasonings, an unwillingness to be convinced, a dread of the self-denials which obedience will demand, cause them to love darkness rather than light. If we seek a knowledge of our duty, we shall surely find it; but there is another thing which most men seek and as certainly find; it is an excuse for the error which they love. Sechele, an African chief, having been converted, at once renounced polygamy. When Dr. Livingstone visited another chief, he was hospitably received; presents of ivory and cattle were offered him. As soon, however, as he declared that his object was to make Christians, the chief refused to hear him. "No," he said, "I do not want to learn from that book; I fear it will change my heart, and make me have only one wife, as Sechele has." Would that this spirit, which repels the truth because it will require sacrifices, were confined to the barbarians of Africa; but it is in our midst, and is the secret of wilful ignorance in thousands.

Very different was the temper of these Magians. They might have perplexed themselves with curious specula-

tions as to the star; they might have lulled themselves by pleading the length and cost of such a journey; they might have waited for other lights—for more clear and manifest tokens. But when were such pretexts ever heard from men really sincere and truly in earnest? No, they hail with joy the light vouchsafed to them—though it is not a sun, but only a star. They arise quickly, they are at once obedient to the heavenly call; and from the regions of the morning, they urge their camels over mountains and through deserts; until all travel-worn, yet with unabated eagerness, they present themselves before that lowly but imperial presence.

See, in the next place, the noble independence of these distinguished sages. Without this habitual assertion of our spiritual freedom, we cannot be Christians; for we shall neither discover nor obey the truth. We will consult the impressions which the truth makes, not upon ourselves, but on others; our docility will be shown in our submission, not to God, but to man; our creed will be, not what is, but what is commonly accepted as, the truth. Recollect, my friends, that the right of every man to think and act for himself is not only a privilege, but a duty which can never be renounced. If we are to follow Jesus, we must liberate our minds and consciences and wills, so that truth shall be revered and obeyed in all things. Relying upon God alone for strength and approbation, we must recognize the grandeur of the soul, and protect the interests of that soul; calling no man master, resisting the usurpation of sects, or priests, or authority, or custom; asserting the control over our own thoughts and acts as the noblest treasure we possess—far nobler than the empire over the material creation.

In these Magi this heroical spirit is admirably illustrated. "When it pleased God," says the Apostle, "to reveal his Son in me, straightway I conferred not with flesh and blood." And such is the spirit of these venerable men, who look not to earth, but to heaven for the light which is to guide their feet. At home, they do not wait to consult with the wise and learned of their own land; but, alone, they leave all and follow the celestial herald which marshals them away. Arriving at Jeru-

salem, what do they find? They expected, beyond a doubt, to meet the whole city and land alive to this great event, filled with joy, other objects forgotten, and the stupendous phenomenon absorbing all hearts. Instead of this, the people and the priests are sunk in ignorance and sensuality, are clinging to their prejudices, and regardless of him who had come to set them free. But none of these things move them, nothing can shake their purpose. They are firm, they will neither use any disguises; nor will they soften the truth to please people, or priest, or king. "Where is he," they boldly inquire, "who is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and have come to worship him;" and, spurning the solicitations of Herod who wished to seduce them, they repair to the royal birthplace, adoring the princely offspring of heaven, pledging to him their delighted allegiance.

And this suggests the only other trait I shall notice in these Magi; I mean their great faith—a faith which appears to me the more admirable, the more I contemplate it.

There are those who maintain that the faith of the ignorant, who only believe what their priests and pastors have taught them, is the best faith; but what a doctrine this, especially what a doctrine in the creed of a Christian. For it is to maintain, that the Jews ought never to have changed their hereditary opinions and received the Gospel. It is really to affirm, that Protestantism ought never to have condemned the errors of Rome; that the heathen ought not to abandon their idols, and turn to Christ. The faith required in the Christian is an enlightened faith; and if it be true, as has been said, that the faith of the Gospel encounters peculiar obstacles in the learned and honored, the difficulty is not in their great minds, but in their proud hearts. Peter, indeed, speaks of things in the Scripture which are "hard to be understood;" but it is not these obscure doctrines which offend such men, it is things easy to be understood, and only "hard" to be obeyed; it is the truths which assail their pride, their passions, and lusts. Let the Gospel be once truly enthroned in the heart, and the more noble the intellect, the more

simple will be the faith; for reason will teach, that faith in God's word is the highest reason. It was thus with Daniel, thus with Paul; and it is thus with these Magi, for how practical, how wise, how immovable, how sublime is their faith.

A practical faith. Do they foolishly argue, as some do who arrogate to themselves all the orthodoxy upon earth, and say, If God means us to go, we need not bestir ourselves, he will in his own time compel us? No, they arise and follow the light which beckons them to obedience.

A wise faith. For, when, arriving at Jerusalem, the star disappears, they do not murmur and abandon the pursuit, but they employ the means which are now left. They enquire diligently of those who ought to know, and seek to find the object of their journey; and it is while they are thus earnestly employing these means that the star again gladdens their souls with his beams. True faith will long for clearer light; but it will use the light which it has; just as the traveller wishes for the morning, but is thankful for the moon or the stars or for a lamp by which he may be guided.

The faith of these Magians was a steadfast faith. Accustomed to oriental ideas of regal pomp and magnificence, how great is their surprise when they find the King of Glory in a manger. What, they might well have said, Is this a palace? Are these the royal chamberlains? Is this the equipage of majesty? We have been mocked, seduced into an arduous journey only to find ourselves the dupes of some magical imposture. But they "stagger not through unbelief,' and—though his couch was thus obscure and humble—shepherds his only retinue,—they see and worship the incarnate God. It is the very office of faith, to penetrate clouds and triumph where the senses would despair; otherwise we Christians would be of all men most miserable. For when we ask, "Where is he who was born king of the Jews, who is the king of our souls, in whom are centred all our affections and hopes? what an answer do we receive, what a spectacle is presented to our eyes. We behold him

nailed to a cross; expiring as a malefactor between two thieves; and over his head, pierced and bleeding, is written, "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

I will only add, that every other element of moral grandeur which belongs to the sublimest faith, is illustrated in the conduct of these reverend apostles. Intrepid courage, profound humility, disinterested munificence, the warmest love, the most inextinguishable loyalty. In all these virtues and graces the Christian will ever find in these noble sages an example to stimulate and regulate his faith.

Having thus set before you three classes, let me finish with a single question; let me, with individual reference, ask those who hear me, To which of these classes do you belong?

My friend, will you range yourself among those who find their representatives in Herod? No, you vehemently exclaim, God forbid that I should be found among those who hate and persecute the truth. But, though less impious, is your conduct less infatuated and fatal, if you persevere in imitating the Priests? if, enlightened as to the truth, seeing plainly your duty, you basely betray that truth, you timidly compromise that duty, and persist in treating the Gospel with a neglect which is even more unnatural than the open enmity of the infidel?

My dear friends, let us at length learn to be truly wise. Let us study the lessons which the Holy Spirit teaches us in the example of these eastern Parsees. Remember, he only is a Christian who, like them, seeks, in simplicity, candor, faith, to know the truth; and who at any cost obeys the truth. Like this lowly child, truth is indeed neglected by the world, but what honor does God confer upon it, how ought we to prize and honor it. Truth, I repeat it, truth is the only treasure of the mind, the only purifier of the heart, the only joy of the conscience, our true glory in life, our exceeding and ineffable consolation in death.

Having once caught a sight of that kingly star of Jacob, these venerable sages can afterwards see no other in all God's heavens. All their lifetime it had been their delight to contemplate the shining hosts which nightly stud the burning dome; but now, stars, clusters, constellations, all the golden fires which fret the brave o'erhanging roof, shed no light for them. One single orb has fixed their hearts, and fixed them forever. Vainly does the gentlest of the planets woo them at early dawn and evening with her silver radiance. Vainly does the ringed Saturn sparkle with refulgent glories, and the mooned Jupiter "flame in the forehead of the morning sky," and Arcturus gird himself with his blazing zones, and the belted Orion brandish his glittering sword, and the Pleiades seek to bind them with their sweet influences. One star now absorbs them; it fills their eyes; it inflames their souls. The Star of Bethlehem reigns in the ascendant; to know no decline nor obscuration; but to hang forever and forever above their horizon—their guide through life; and the Hesperus of the grave, illuminating all the dusky valley of the shadow of death.

Let us cherish this sublime faith, this supreme adoring loyalty to Jesus and his truth. "If ye continue in my words, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." God grant that this sublime freedom may be secured by each of us. "When they saw the star,"—it is said of these oriental travellers—they "rejoiced with exceeding great joy." If Pagans could thus rejoice in the truth, what ought to be the emotions of Christians? If a few mysterious beams could delight the hearts of those who had been nurtured in superstition, what should we feel, who have lived from childhood under the splendors of the Gospel? If the followers of Zoroaster were thus transported by the rays of a star, what rapture, what adoring ecstacy should forever glow in the bosom of a disciple of Jesus beholding the noonday effulgence of the Sun himself? May each of us know the truth. May we obey the truth. May we understand from blessed

experience the tranquility, the freedom, the happiness which the truth can bestow. God grant us this unspeakable blessing. To him be glory and dominion forever. AMEN.

Sermon Third.

BIBLE TESTIMONY THE BEST TESTIMONY.

[FIRST SERMON ON THE TEXT.]

"If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead."—LUKE XVI: 31.

IN the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, there are several most solemn and instructive lessons given by Him to whom the secrets of eternity were all open. He here speaks to us of the surprising contrasts which will take place in men's conditions, when death shall strike a balance and their destinies be fixed forever. And he here lifts the veil and shews us one man whose soul passed, immediately after death, into a state of unspeakable and everlasting torment. If this is not in the parable, then nothing is there, and Jesus is a false teacher. And when we examine the character of the man thus lost, what was he? an infidel? a debauchee? a blasphemer? let us not thus turn off the edge of the Saviour's warning. The rich man is not charged with these vices; nor was he a glutton, a cruel monster of inhumanity, as we are wont to represent him. It was not necessary that Jesus should uncover the abyss of hell to shew us the doom of such criminals. His allowing a diseased and loathsome beggar to take his stand at the porch of his palace and thus to receive alms from his wealthy and noble visitors, was really an evidence of his charitable disposition.* The

* Speaking of the Palazzo Lanfranchi, in Pisa, Simond says, "Alighting at the door of this very fine abode, we found it beset, and the outside flight of steps literally crowded with frightful looking objects, men, women, children, basking in the sun together, eaten up with sores and vermin, and clamorous for alms. Such a sight, denoting a charitable house, is here deemed creditable."

sin by which this man involved himself in such misery was a life of selfish ease, indolence, sensual enjoyment—the very life which all envy, which many of the poor as well as the rich now lead, and which Jesus here declares to be incompatible with salvation, directly opposed to the life of faith, self-denial, holiness, which he requires in his disciples.

But these and other truths taught in the parable I must sacrifice, that I may come to the very important declaration in the text. His eyes now opened to the real estimate of things, this unhappy man sees that salvation alone deserves our cares, prayers and sacrifices; he therefore beseeches that Lazarus may be sent to admonish his five brethren, lest they too come to this place of torment. Abraham answers, that God has given a revelation to them which was abundantly sufficient. And when Dives insists that a messenger from the grave would be effectual, the patriarch replies in these remarkable words—"If they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead."

It is to this assertion I am going to ask your attention. Before proceeding with the matter allow me, however, to remind you that the truth of this affirmation does not depend at all upon the success or failure of my argument. It is the declaration of that God who made us, and who knows perfectly what means are best adapted to convince and persuade us. I grieve when I hear ministers speak of proving what God has proclaimed; it insinuates that the communication may be false. But a preacher may humbly seek to elucidate a passage in God's word. "By manifestation of the truth he may commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God."—This is what I would now attempt; and for this purpose I submit to you two propositions. First, I say, that a man living in Jerusalem, in the days of the apostles, had evidence of the truth of the revelation given us by God, superior to any which could have been furnished by an apparition from the grave. Secondly, we, living at this day, have evidence as to revealed truth superior to any which could have been possessed by a man living at Jerusalem in the days of the apostles. These two propo-

sitions cover the entire ground; and, these being established, it will follow, of course, that the same causes which now defeat the ordinary means of grace would render ineffectual, for any permanent saving influence, a message delivered by one sent from the dead. Honor me with even more than your usual attention, as I must compress into two brief discourses matter which might easily be expanded into a volume.

First, then, I affirm that a man living at Jerusalem in the days of the apostles had evidence of the truth of the revelation given us by God, superior to any which could have been furnished by an apparition from the grave.—This is my first proposition; and to put the argument in a form so simple that a child may comprehend it, let us suppose that the prayer of this rich man had been granted, and that Lazarus had been sent to his five brethren living in their palaces at Jerusalem.

Now to this miserable outcast from heaven and from hope, it seemed impossible that such a warning could be unheeded. Nor am I at all surprised at this. To a man in hell, to a man in the midst of all those tremendous realities,—afar off that heaven which he had wantonly forfeited—all around and within the anguish of the damned, —to a man suddenly torn from all the pleasures, the voluptuous charms and luxuries of such a life, and precipitated into "the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone"—I understand that it would appear impossible for such an admonition to be in vain. Which of you would disregard this sermon, if you had been plunged into these flaming gulfs for an hour, and then brought back to earth? If a preacher were sent to those dungeons of despair, and were only for once to proclaim free pardon, for once to cry "Escape for your lives," how many of that gloomy population would treat lightly his exhortation or begin to make excuses?

With the five aristocratic citizens of the metropolis, sunk in earthliness, filled with pride, revelling in all the gratifications and appliances of wealth and fashion, the matter would, however, have been very different. A message like that which Lazarus would bear, a message so unwelcome, a message requiring them to renounce

all their darling pleasures, their old habits of effeminacy and self-indulgence, to surmount all the seductions of the world, to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, its inveterate passions, and to lead lives of self-denial, mortification, holiness—he must be indeed a novice in human observation and experience who believes that these five brethren would have been persuaded by it.

Nor let any stop me by questioning what I am asserting. On this point I have practical demonstration. I have facts with which there can be no sort of equivocation. Witness the Jews. How often did God send messages to them from eternity—speaking to them by his prophets, multiplying visions, instructions, admonitions, entreaties. Nor did they doubt that the communications were from Jehovah, yet they despised these reproofs and set at naught these counsels. Yea, God himself spake to them, at Sinai, with thunder and lightning and with the terrible clangor of a trumpet smiting the silence of the desert. God himself went with them in the pillar of fire and cloud. "Ask now of the days that are past which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth; and ask from the one side of heaven to the other, whether there has been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire as thou hast heard?" But scarcely had the sight of the glory of the Lord, like devouring fire on the top of the mount, ceased; even while Moses was in the mount, and before forty days had elapsed, "they made a calf in Horeb, worshipped the molten image, and changed their glorious God into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass." During that wonderful journey in which they were fed every day miraculously, and with that august banner hanging over them, they rebelled against God and wearied him with their sins and passions. I need not, however, go to other ages or to another people. The demonstration needed I find at this day and nearer home. I have it here in this city, here in this house, among you who are listening to this sermon. For are there any of you who doubt the truth of the Bible? Not one. Yet how many of you show in your lives that the snares of the

senses, the fascinations of the world, the temptations of the passions, the cares of business, the deceitfulness of riches, the lust of many things are stronger than "the powers of the world to come;" too strong for the admonitions, invitations, convictions which crowd upon you from eternity.

The fact is that we take up the whole thing amiss, when we reason about revelation as we do about mathematical problems. The reception of religious truth depends far more upon the heart than upon the head; and when truth condemns us, or requires painful sacrifices, the heart is deceitful above all things, it is inexhaustible in inventing doubts, objections, suggestions and artifices by which the force of evidence may be evaded. We see this constantly, not only in our pretended sceptics, but in multitudes who believe the Scriptures, yet "obey not the truth," and whose conduct is so unaccountable upon any rational supposition, that the apostle declares they are "bewitched." And if Lazarus had been sent to the rich man's brethren, these same pretexts would have lulled their consciences.

Affecting to be a philosopher, the first brother would say, How can it be proved that the man died and rose from the dead? This would be a miracle, but a miracle contradicts nature and therefore no evidence can establish it. Such is Mr. Hume's sophistry against miracles; and the "father of lies" would not have failed to suggest it to this lover of pleasure in Jerusalem. This apparition at the time seemed real enough, the second brother, a pretender to science, would say; but it is easily explained on physiological principles. It was simply one of those very strange optical delusions—the effect of a disturbed nervous system—of which we read such singular accounts. The third brother, a practical man, piqueing himself on his knowledge of human nature—would treat the appearance with ridicule, and, with his gay companions would pronounce it only another of these tricks of jugglery by which artful rogues impose upon the credulity of women and children. The fourth brother, feigning great humility, would

ask, whether anybody could believe that God would thus trouble himself about things so insignificant and unworthy? While the fifth, unable to overcome some superstitious misgivings, would ascribe the phenomenon to demoniacal agency. I cannot deny that a ghost did visit me; but did not the witch of Endor raise Samuel from the dead? The sacred books warn us of the charms used by evil spirits; and as to his seemingly kind admonitions, and all he gibbered about our brother, why Satan, we know, can transform himself into an angel of light for the malignant purpose of troubling us in the innocent use of that wealth which God has given us richly to enjoy.

I am supposing that they would condescend to pay any attention to a messenger from the grave. The probability is that they would refuse to listen at all, and dismiss with contempt an impostor telling such a preposterous tale. But supposing the vision to be such as to startle them at the moment; the subterfuges which I have put into the mouths of these brethren are only a few out of a hundred I might suggest, all of which are much more rational than the pleas for doubts and disobedience which we every day hear from people around us. No sooner had he been converted than—his mind irradiated with divine light—his heart glowing with love for souls—Melancthon hastened forth, confident that he could bring everybody to welcome the truth which had broken in upon him in such power and glory. But he soon returned to Luther and said, "I find the world too strong for young Philip." His experience had been that of prophets and apostles and of the Saviour himself; they still had mournfully to exclaim, "Who hath believed our report?" Nor would Lazarus have fared better in his ministry. These five brethren were like the rest of mankind; they had the same engrossments, the same aversion from religious concerns, the same love of wealth, honor, power, sensual pleasures. They would either have made light of the warning; or they would have gone to their farms or to their merchandise. Purple and fine linen and sumptuous living every day, would have been stronger logic than any

which a visitant from another world could have urged; and soon their old habits, their customary gratifications, a round of fashionable company and amusements—balls, clubs, theatres, gaming, the care of their large estates now augmented by their brother's death, and the division of which demanded their immediate attention—would have displaced all serious feeling; and the world and the things of the world—the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life—would have reasserted and resumed the supremacy over them.

All this seems to me to be incontestable; and all this appeals to your common sense; for the arguments submitted to you have been drawn, not from books of theology, but from universal observation and experience. I am well aware, however, that some of you may still dissent. "Nay," said the rich man, "but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent," and what he uttered you are secretly thinking. When charged with his sin, Adam replied, "The woman that thou gavest me, she tempted me." The language of Dives repeats this imputation by insinuating that God had given an insufficient revelation—an impiety not confined to hell from whence it came, but still heard amongst us; and to expose which I have only to refer to the volume thus assailed, in whose pages we find the very attestation required, and as to which our cavillers, like those in the Saviour's day, tell us that if this were given they would believe.

I am supposing, you remember, that a man had lived at Jerusalem in the days of the apostles. Now at that time there was really living in Bethany, a village only two miles from the city, a man named Lazarus who had been raised from the dead. Many of the Jews witnessed this miracle, and he who had come back from the grave was, no doubt, often in the city. Nobody then questioned this resurrection. Celsus, the most acute and learned of the ancient pretenders to infidelity, and who lived but a few years after the apostles, distinctly admits it as a fact, but he ascribes it to magic. Magic! but if magic could explain the raising of this man, it might then explain every other phenomenon of the same kind.

This, however, is little when compared with another

fact which I now bring forward. The raising of Lazarus was the return only of a common man from a common grave. One living in Jerusalem during the time of the apostles had before him a death and resurrection of a very different sort; I mean, of course, those of Jesus himself, to which it is not improbable he referred when —addressing the captious Pharisees who were always requiring a sign—he made Abraham, the father of whom they boasted, declare from heaven, "If they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

Now as to this grand, central fact upon which the Christian rests with a faith, an assurance, a joy unspeakable and full of glory, I speak confidently—as one accustomed in other days to sift evidence most carefully, and as one who feels that everything depends upon perfect certainty here—when I affirm that no event in history is ascertained by testimony more absolutely conclusive. With the mass of evidence on this subject you are familiar and I need not now go into the details. Let me only repeat what I have just asserted, that no ordinary death and resurrection could have been half so convincing. In the first place, remember that a long series of prophecies not to be misunderstood, had concentrated universal attention upon Jesus as the promised Messiah. Then, his doctrines and miracles proclaimed openly that God was with him. His life and character elevated him immeasurably above the sons of men, and repelled the thought that he could deceive others or be himself deceived. His execution was public, so that there could be not a question about his death; and as if to make assurance doubly sure, he was pierced by a lance, and blood and water gushing from the wound showed that the pericardium had been perforated. To all this add, that he had staked the truth of his doctrines upon his resurrection; and that the Jews, accepting the issue, used every precaution to prevent any deception, sealing the tomb and placing a guard of veteran Roman soldiers as a watch over it day and night. Collect these thoughts, and you will confess that no common death and resurrection could have so defied all controversy and cavil.

Now, suppose the contemporary of the apostles of whom I am speaking to have possessed the evidence which the apostles had; to have known Jesus before his crucifixion, and to have seen him after he had risen; you will admit that no other death and resurrection could have shed such perfect certainty upon the Gospel. Or, suppose that, although he had not himself beheld the risen Redeemer, he, like thousands around him, had been thoroughly satisfied by the testimony of the witnesses, you will concede that it was all one as if he had had ocular demonstration; for this could have done no more than to convince him. All this is self-evident. But how, you say, if he had heard the testimony and still doubted?—Why, then, he would have been an incurable sceptic who would doubt anything which he did not wish to believe. His unbelief must have sprung, not from his head, but his heart, from a lodged and rooted prejudice against truth, from a love of darkness rather than light; and vainly for him would a messenger have been sent from the world of spirits.

Here, again, we take up the whole thing amiss and entirely mistake the philosophy of the human intellect, when we think that the testimony of the senses to an apparition would exert any permanent influence. For a day or two, I grant, that such a phenomenon would terrify a guilty soul. But the visit would, of necessity, be only transient, and it requires little knowledge of man—of the jealousy with which he revises and scrutinizes his past feelings and conclusions when he wishes to get rid of them—not to anticipate what would follow after a while; how this ghost-seer would begin to suspect, and then gradually succeed in banishing the whole thing as an illusion, a dream, a phantom conjured up by distempered nerves, and by the strange, inexplicable, mysterious power which such nerves exert upon the brain and imagination; in short as one of those spectra about which volumes have been written, and which no medical science can fully explain.

On the other hand, it is impossible to conceive how any sane mind could have resisted the accumulated proofs of the Saviour's resurrection. Why just look a

moment at the number of witnesses; not one but many; not only the apostles at different times, but five hundred at one time; not only the disciples, who if Christ had not risen, were the dupes of an impostor, but enemies among whom was that bitter persecutor Saul of Tarsus. Consider the fact to which they testify, one as to which they could not possibly have been mistaken;—that they had seen him, touched him, conversed with him; eaten with him; and this not for a brief hour but for forty days.

Mark the time and place of this testimony; not after the lapse of years, but immediately; not in some district remote from the scene; but in Jerusalem, in the very face of the people and the Sanhedrim. Observe their perfect unanimity. If you enter a court-house and listen to half a dozen men who have been subpœnaed as to some tragedy which took place in their presence, you will find scarcely two agreeing in all the details. But as to Christ's resurrection—though the witnesses differ in age, temperament, education, prejudices—there is not the slightest shade of discrepancy. Study the lives of these witnesses, and see the wonderful revolution wrought in their character and conduct by the great truth which they attest. Behold the miracles by which God vindicates the veracity of this cloud of witnesses. Bring forth, they said, your sick, your lame, your halt, your blind; and in the name of risen Jesus they healed them all. Place yourselves at the tribunals before which they are dragged, and examined, and cross-examined, and threatened with the severest penalties; and note the intrepid, triumphant confidence with which they repeat their depositions. And add, lastly, the poverty, contempt, persecution, torture, cruel martyrdom with which they sealed their testimony—braving all, welcoming all, in all exclaiming, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Now I ask, could a man living in Jerusalem at that time resist all this? Really I should say he could not. I would pronounce it impossible, if I did not know that

the heart will resist anything which it is unwilling to believe. Nothing can be plainer, however, than this, that if a man could stand it out against such proof, neither would he be persuaded though Lazarus had come to him from the dead.

For just see how the matter stands. In order to evade or resist all this testimony, consider what absurdities a man would have had to digest. He must either have supposed that all these witnesses had been deceived, which was impossible; or he must have believed that a fable changed entirely the character of these witnesses; that without any motive, nay, in spite of every motive by which men are influenced, they combined to testify to a fable, to suffer all mortal evils for a fable; to die the most painful deaths for a fable, and for a fable most easily exposed; since if Jesus had not risen, the Jews possessed his dead body and could at any time have produced it —all which would have required the stupidity of an idiot, for all which a man must have stultified himself.

Whereas, as we have seen, it would not have been at all impossible, nay not at all difficult, gradually to doubt, then to reject, then to banish all thought of a vision, the reality of which rested only upon the remembered, ever receding evidence of organs which are often diseased and strangely distorted.

Sermon Fourth.

BIBLE TESTIMONY THE BEST TESTIMONY.

[SECOND SERMON ON THE TEXT]

"If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."—LUKE XVI: 31.

IN the former discourse I think I have established our first proposition, and have demonstrated that a man living at Jerusalem in the times of the apostles had stronger evidence of the truths recorded in the Bible than could have been furnished by the mission of Lazarus from the dead. I pass, now to our remaining proposition, which maintains that we, at this day, have evidence superior to that which could have been possessed by a man in Jerusalem during the ministry of the Apostles.

We have just seen that the evidence of the truth of Christ's doctrine must have convinced such a man if he were sane; but now, this evidence is just as conclusive for us as it was for him. If, indeed, the testimony had been only by word of mouth, and had been transmitted to us through a succession of oral witnesses, why, then, I could not have denied that it would be liable to suspicion, just in proportion to our distance from the time and place of the transactions put in issue. But you know that this is not the case. The testimony on which we rely is the original deposition of the apostles themselves; and this record is, of course, invested with the same authority now as when it was first written. It would be simply foolish to pretend that the lapse of years invalidates the genuineness or authenticity or force of a document drawn up and signed on the spot by those who were eye-witnesses of an important event, and which has come down to us in the very words of its authors. Do

any of you doubt that such a man as Washington once lived and composed the letters and dispatches, and performed the deeds attributed to him? Nor does any interval of time affect our faith in a well-authenticated historical fact.

You read the writings of Luther, and the Commentaries of Julius Cæsar, and you are just as sure about the existence and works and achievements of these heroes as you are about those of Washington. Well, now, all this applies to the matter conveyed to us by the sacred biographers. I lay no stress here upon the inspiration of the Gospels, which, of course, verifies them for all ages; our argument regards them as we would any other annals the truth of which we do not question. And I say that proximity to the period of the Saviour's resurrection could add just nothing at all to a man's convictions as to that grand event. Those convictions must depend entirely upon the amount and weight of evidence; and this we have as fully and irrefragably as if we had lived in the second or third century, as if we had conversed with the apostles, and had received their narrative from their own lips. Up to this point, then, you will admit that we stand upon the same footing with a man who lived at Jerusalem in the days of the first disciples. But there are other aspects of the case in which we possess vast advantages. In the fact that, instead of having to overcome the prejudices of a Jew, we have the force of public opinion on the side of the Gospel; in the fact that age after age has sat in assize upon the Scripture canon, and has delivered verdict after verdict confirming its certainty; in the fact that all the assaults of infidelity have only vindicated the invulnerable strength of the foundation on which the Christian's faith reposes; in the standing miracles afforded by the clear fulfillment of prophecies; finally in the cumulative and constantly accumulating evidence furnished by the wonderful triumphs of the kingdom of Jesus—triumphs confessedly beyond the power of a few illiterate obscure fishermen, triumphs which have shaped and are shaping the growing stature of the world, moulding its character and destiny—and which Gamaliel, the most distinguished Jewish contemporary of

the apostles, pronounced impossible unless the cause was the cause of God himself; in all these respects we enjoy unspeakable advantages over a man in Jerusalem at the commencement of Christianity.

I have now, I humbly conceive, established beyond all fair controversy both the propositions submitted to you. And these having been established, the assertion in our text at once commends itself to your conscience and challenges your candid acquiescence. As I remarked in the outset of this discourse, that assertion rests upon the veracity of God, and does not require any confirmation from man or angel. I hope, however, indeed I see in your countenances, that I have induced you to reflect upon it, and constrained you to give it your full concurrence.—And this being so, it follows that, if the means of salvation vouchsafed us by infinite wisdom and mercy do not bring you to repent and cast your souls upon the great atonement, no other means would be effectual. If one should come to you from the dead you would not be persuaded; you would still shelter yourself in some refuge of lies; you would still invent pleas, pretexts, subterfuges for worldliness and disobedience; you would still continue to swell the number of those to whom God says, "Behold ye despisers and wonder and perish, for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe though a man declare it unto you."

It may be that some of you are saying, Far be it from us to despise the Gospel. It is true we do not believe it; we confess that we are sceptics, but it is not our fault; our doubts are involuntary, we cannot prevent them.—Very well. Rest assured, however, that you would still have these involuntary doubts though one rose from the dead. I will not say to you what I ought to say, and what death will soon force you to confess. I will not remind you how preposterous it is for one to talk about involuntary doubts, whose indolence and worldliness have prevented him from examining the subject. Nor will I stop to shew that these doubts spring from your ignorance, or your passions, or a most unworthy vanity. Let this pass. You tell me you are sincere in your incredulity. Be it so. You would justly be offended if I should

question your veracity. But I tell you that you would be equally sincere in your incredulity, whatever method God might use with you as a rational, moral, accountable being.

In fact, however, why need I speak in this strain?—In all candor, are there any of this class of people here? Are there any pretended infidels in this house? Not one. And if the question were only about belief in the Bible, and not about forsaking the world and your sins, there is not a man nor a woman within these walls who would not be a sincere Christian. If, then, you still neglect the great salvation, it is quite certain that no real permanent conversion would be wrought in you, if an apparition came to you from the grave. For you could only believe then; and you now believe.

To bring this matter home to ourselves, let it be supposed that some supernatural vision, say some angelic messenger should present himself to you to night as you are returning home, or in the loneliness of your chamber; what would he say to you? He would speak to you of the glories of heaven; he would warn you of the miseries of hell; he would perhaps expostulate with you as to some besetting sin for which you are every moment perilling your soul; he would assure you that almost all who perish from congregations to which the Gospel is faithfully preached, perish through procrastination, through the fatal influence of worldly cares and pursuits, perish by thinking and acting just as you are thinking and acting now, and have been for years thinking and acting. If some resplendent visitor should be manifested to your senses, and should thus address you, the effect, you think, would be instantaneous and abiding. Well, now, see how the case stands. Everything which I have supposed this celestial monitor to say, you know, you now believe, and believe on God's testimony. Why then do you not act as if you had been thus visited?

I have suggested some subjects upon which an angel would admonish you. But there is one topic as to which, above all, he would plead with you, as to which he would entreat you, implore you, conjure you with tears (if celestial beings can weep;) and you well know what that topic

is. It is the amazing mystery which "angels desire to look into." It is that stupendous deed of love which was wrought, not in heaven, but on earth, not for angels, but for men. To cherub or seraph, to one of the heavenly host who rejoice over the repentance of a sinner, the cross, the altar on Calvary, and the great atonement finished on that altar would be the absorbing theme—a theme transcendently more awful, affecting, irresistible than all the disclosures he could bring from eternity—more appalling than hell, more touching, subduing, inspiring, rejoicing than heaven. But upon this topic you know, from childhood up you have listened to all, you have believed all which a preternatural messenger could tell you. Visiting the earth and witnessing the conduct of most of those to whom the Gospel is preached, an inhabitant of the other world would unquestionably suppose, at first, that they did not believe the glad tidings.—But when he came to know that these things were believed and produced so little effect, he would surely regard this as the most incredible infatuation, as the most astounding of all the manifestations of human guilt, apostasy, depravity, and of the dismal power of the god of this world "who hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ who is the image of God should shine unto them."

My friends, we are so accustomed to see the Gospel preached and believed without any saving influence, that we have come to regard it as something not at all surprising; but nothing can be more unnatural and astonishing. Appealing, as they do, to every feeling, motive, passion by which the conscience can be alarmed, the intellect absorbed, the heart moved and melted, it would seem—supposing men to be men—that the truths of revelation must at once produce their legitimate effects. That they are treated with indifference betrays a fund of apathy and insanity as amazing as it is deplorable. What, my dear hearer, you believe, you know that your soul is immortal, that it must be saved or lost—yet this knowledge has no sort of effect upon you; you believe, you know that you must soon die, that you may die to-night, and that death will translate you either to the hymns, halle-

lujahs, raptures of the redeemed, or to chains of darkness, to weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth forever—yet this knowledge has no effect upon you; above all, you believe, you know that for you the Brightness of the Father's glory stooped to earth and, after a weary pilgrimage of sorrow, expired upon the cross—yet this belief, this knowledge has no effect upon you, all this cannot move you, all this does not signify; you will in spite of all this, precipitate yourself upon everlasting destruction. For my part, I declare that when, in my closet I ponder these things, I am convinced that they are absolutely impossible. I read of the deceitfulness of the human heart, of "all the deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish;" but infidelity, atheism itself appears to me not half so utterly irreconcilable with sanity of mind. To think thus, however, one must remain in his closet. To think thus one must close his eyes and ears to what is passing around him. Let him open his eyes, let him go into the world, let him even come into the sanctuary, and very different convictions will force themselves upon him.—On no side can he turn, without meeting melancholy exemplifications of this worse than brutish indifference and stupidity, without seeing men and women who, in the language of the Holy Spirit, have "madness in their hearts"—people otherwise sane, but as to eternal things bereft of all reason—immortal beings in whose bosoms these truths have had a lodgment from their childhood, and who are yet driving on, resolved to rush into a perdition most horrible, and to their minds not more horrible than certain.

And after this will you pretend that some other expedient will arrest and change you? No, my dear hearer, no. God who created man, knows the agencies which are best calculated to rouse him from the lethargy of nature and to bring him to obedience. In giving us a standing revelation he plies us with these agencies. If these fail, he himself declares, and reason, observation, experience compel you to confess, that a disembodied spirit coming from the unseen world would also fail. It is quite certain that God will not try by any other expedient. What more can he do to win your heart, than to give his

Son to die for you? What more to alarm you and cause you to flee from the coming wrath, than to uncover hell and point you to the wretchedness of the lost? But it is equally certain that, whatever expedient he might try, the same causes would frustrate it; the same hardness, the same cares and distractions, the same devotedness to the world, the same unwillingness to suspend your pursuit of pleasure, to cease to be fascinated by the passions and to give your attention to the investigation of truth; the same prejudices, the same pride and vanity, the same pretexts and subterfuges which now defeat the Gospel would defeat any other ministry; neither would you be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

And now what remains but that I implore those of you for whom this discourse is intended to make the personal application which is so plain and solemn. My friends, you every day ask us, what is conversion? what is saving faith? Our subject gives you the answer. It tells you that conversion, saving faith is no transient, intermittent, accident or emotion, but the being so "persuaded" by revealed truth as to yield your heart and life to its lessons and requirements. The Gospel is "the wisdom and the power of God." If you neglect this Gospel, you destroy yourself wilfully and wantonly; for you despise the wisdom and resist the power of him who is thoroughly acquainted with the mechanism of our nature, and who, in the means of grace now exhibited, employs the very apparatus which he knows is best calculated to save us; and you will therefore perish certainly, unnecessarily, wilfully, wantonly.

And O see what it will be to perish. Look at this lost soul. See this wretched man casting his longing glances across the great gulf up to that heaven which he had slighted; and think what this sight will be to you, if in hell you shall lift up your eyes and see afar off your father, mother, wife, sister, brother, child in those abodes of blessedness. Hear this wretched man crying, "I am tormented in this flame," and feeling that a drop of water to cool his parched tongue would be a sort of heaven to him. What a doom this for you. What a doom for one who might have been saved. What a doom

for one who was entreated to be saved. What a doom for one to whom I this night unfold all the riches of grace and love; to whom this night I offer without money or price the waters of the river of life, those oceans of delight in which his soul may bathe forever.

My dearly beloved hearers, have you heard me? Have you listened to what I have been saying? Do you believe these things and can you still be proof against them? Recollect that these truths are not from the Law, but from the Gospel, from the lips of Jesus. Recollect who are those for whom this misery is reserved; and not only for the infidel, the debauched, the blasphemer; but "all who obey not the truth." To these reflections add another; it is, that many of you now before me, now looking me in the face, belong to the class I have just described. Lastly, life is the only period during which you can escape this impending doom—a life so brief, so uncertain, which may be suddenly terminated by any one of the thousand diseases, the thousand accidents which lie in ambuscade everywhere in your path. Enter into these truths. Will you still continue unconcerned? Can you "make light of it?" Can you eat, drink, sleep, while the tremendous problem is undecided as to your future destiny?

I implore, I conjure, I adjure you, let it not be. Have mercy upon me, if not upon yourselves. I know not what were the emotions of Abraham as he beheld this lost soul in hell. But I am not to you what he was to the rich man. I am your pastor who loves you, who day and night prays for you. The very thought that such a destiny may be yours, fills my eyes with tears, my heart with unutterable anguish; how then could I endure the spectacle itself? Some of you seem to have made up your minds to neglect the great salvation, to slight, despise all which God has done or can do to arouse and warn you. Well, remember, that you will die as you live. Let me tell you this now while I can speak plainly to you. The hour may be at hand when I cannot be thus faithful; the hour when I shall be summoned to your dying pillow, and when my love for you and my sympathy for your weeping family will disarm me. At

such a time, and in such a case, a pastor knows what he ought to do; and, believing the Scripture to be true—*you* know what he ought to do. As his ministry can then no longer avail you, he ought to use your example as a warning to others; he ought to employ it to save wife, children, friends on whom your influence has been so pernicious. He ought to say, See this man. For ten, twenty, thirty, forty years he has set at naught all God's reproofs and has despised his mercies, counsels, entreaties. Now he is dying. In half an hour he will pass into eternity and will know by experience what is the frightful doom which he defied. He is dying, and his soul will this night be cast into the lake that burneth.

But can a pastor ever be thus true to the Bible and his own convictions? No. We are weak men, our hearts are melted by the scenes we witness in the chambers of the dying; and we seek to invent hopes and illusions to console those who look to us for supports in that fearful moment. Let me then warn you now, and tell you from God, that the end of the rich man must be yours if you continue unbelieving, impenitent, disobedient.

And yet why should this be? Why will you die? What are you waiting for? Is it for some calamity to rouse you to solemn reflection? But can any calamity compare with this, that you are every moment exposed to such a frightful doom for eternity? Or are you waiting until some voice of unutterable love and tenderness shall speak to you from heaven. Such a voice now pleads with you. It is to keep you from sinking into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels, that Jesus has, in this parable, drawn the curtain and disclosed to you the realities of another world. It is to save you that, in accents of beseeching earnestness, he cries to you from the top of the cross, from his throne in glory. Or, perhaps, you wish some messenger to come to you from the dead. My friend, God will not send any such messenger. What am I saying? He does send such a messenger. Lo, he is here. I step aside, I vacate the pulpit. Behold one from the dead, one from hell has been commissioned to come to you, and now stands in my place

and preaches to you. Terrible preacher; hear him. A preacher robed in flames and emerging from the caverns of despair. A preacher who, for an exordium, throws his baleful eyes around, and clasps his burning hands upon his head; who, for an argument, points to the billows of fire which rage and toss in the bottomless pit, and to the smoke of their torment ascending forever and ever; who for a peroration, wails out, above the clamor and thunder of the roaring surges, O go not, go not to that place of torment.

Hear, ah, hear him. My sermons are weak and vain I bring to you this night another preacher, whose sermon is not weak; let it not be in vain. Hear him, apply to yourselves his warnings, exhortations, entreaties. And apply them now. Delay not. To-morrow it may be too late. To-morrow another messenger may come to you from eternity; and that messenger may be death. To-morrow you may die and be buried; and in hell you may lift up your eyes being in torment, and see across the impassable gulf all the glories you this night despised; and may cry in vain for a drop of water to cool your parched tongue; while those words, "Son, remember!" shall sting you with intolerable remorse, as they pour in upon you a flood of bitter recollections—reminding you of all the mercies, means, opportunities, counsels which were exhausted upon you, and of the obduracy and obstinacy by which—despising the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and long suffering—you treasured up unto yourself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

Sermon Fifth.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

"Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise."—LUKE X: 37.

AS the most beautiful uninspired portrait of the Redeemer's character has been drawn by an infidel, (I refer to Rousseau's letter which ends with that question,—"My friend, could Jesus Christ have been a man?") so it is very remarkable that two of the finest eulogiums on the Christian religion were pronounced, unintentionally of course, by two of its bitterest enemies. "Let us consider," thus wrote Julian the Apostate to a pagan priest, "that nothing has contributed so much to the progress of the Christian superstition as their charity to strangers. We must begin to discharge this obligation ourselves. We must establish hospitals. For it would be a shame for us to abandon our poor, while the Jews have none, and while the impious Galileans provide not only for their own poor but for ours." And Lucian the satirist said, "It is incredible what pains and diligence they use to succor one another. Their legislator made them believe that they are all brethren, and since they renounced our religion and worshipped their crucified leader, they live according to his laws, and all their riches are in common."

Whatever assaults a modern Julian or Lucian might make upon our conduct, it is quite certain they would bring no such charges as these. There is no danger that any body will upbraid us with a delusion which causes us to regard each other as brothers, with a superstition which betrays us into excesses of charity and benevolence.

The truth is, the first Christians were infected with a

celestial contagion. They caught from Jesus the very spirit which he brought from heaven. "God is love." Jesus was "God manifest in the flesh." He was the incarnation of love;—love exploring the abysses of human wretchedness; love uttering tones which sank into men's hearts, as the soft rain into the thirsty earth; love diffusing itself everywhere in the dearest, sweetest charities; love sympathizing with human sorrow; weeping over human misery, relieving human distress, expiring for human redemption. And these disciples "learned Christ," studied the truth, not in cold systems and creeds, but "truth as it was in Jesus." Hence their souls were so fired that nothing could satisfy them. Each regarded himself as a missionary. Each glowed with a spirit which we are so ready to admire, so slow to emulate. Not only did the churches send the Gospel to to distant lands, but every church became the centre of beneficent influences at home. Their love for the poor and suffering knew no bounds, and their munificence seems to be almost fabulous. Chrysostom mentions one church which supported three thousand old people and widows and orphans. When the emperor Decius demanded the wealth of another church, the deacons asked for one day in which to collect them; and at the expiration of that time they appeared with a multitude of the poor, the maimed, the blind, the sick, the aged, the orphaned, and said, "Sire, these are the riches of our church."

Such was their charity. For ours———but I stop, I check myself, I draw a veil over the melancholy contrast, and proceed with what heart and hope I may, to the business before me.

I am here this morning to address you in behalf of our "Ladies' Home Mission Society"—a society formed to visit the poor and suffering, to relieve their wants, to read the Scriptures and impart spiritual instruction to them, to clothe their children and bring them into the Sabbath school; and I cannot discharge the office with which these Christian women have honored me better than by offering you a simple commentary on the parable from which my text is taken.

I. The scene is on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho; a road leading among ravines, desolate, gloomy, and one portion of it so dangerous that it was called "The Bloody Way." Here, says the Saviour, lay a man one morning, who the night before had been attacked by banditti, stripped of his clothing, and dreadfully wounded. There has been much discussion about this sufferer, whether he was a Samaritan, or a Jew. A Jew he certainly was; but Jesus says nothing about his country. He was a man—something more than Jew or Samaritan;—a man. As he thus lay naked, mangled, filling the air with his moans, life ebbing away through the cruel gashes, a priest approached; but no sooner did he catch a sight of the piteous spectacle than he averted his looks, and hurried away. In vain do the wounds, the groans of this wretched victim appeal to his humanity; he turns away suddenly, quickens the pace of his horse, and passes by "on the other side."

Jericho was the chief station of the priests. From this city they went up "in their courses," to Jerusalem to discharge their sacred functions. The language shows that this priest was returning; and we see how little influence his official sanctity exerted upon his heart. "By chance there came down a certain priest." Not by chance however in the common acceptation of the term. In these events of life which seem fortuitous, God is putting our characters to the test. And we see under his clerical vestments, what was the character of this man. But let us not waste our indignation upon him. The characters in this parable are portraits, and this portrait still finds its original in the world. This priest is the representative of the utterly selfish and heartless. And now in what light can we regard a man of this class without feeling that he ought to be placed upon an eminence of infamy, and that his picture cannot be charged with colors too dark and odious.

Consider him for a moment with reference to God. "A Priest!"—and I make no doubt that in Jerusalem, while seen of men, he moved about in full canonicals, and, like another Judas Iscariot, whined most sanctimoniously about his great compassion for the poor and suffer-

ing; and had this miserable object been presented there, he would have won great eclat, and the populace would have been edified by a most hypocritical ostentation of mercy. But it is not when we are before the world that our true character comes out; it is when God alone sees us; and God is nobody to a thoroughly selfish man. The pharisees paraded the first table of the law on their phylacteries. But they never wrote the second table which requires love to man; and the very design of this parable was to expose the subterfuge of a lawyer who pretended that there was some doubt as to the word "neighbor," and to teach us that all professions of love to God are mere sheer, downright falsehood, if we have no love for our fellow men. "Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need and shutteth up his bowels from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

Nor is this all. Such a man sets himself, habitually and on principle, in diametrical opposition to the fixed, plain arrangements of God's providential government of this world. Look where we may, from the grains of dirt under our feet, up to the "majestical roof fretted with golden fires," we find that cohesion is the law of this planet. Through the entire range of creation nothing is insulated. Every particle of matter has affinities to other particles. Especially are human beings dependent on each other for mutual assistance. While God directly caters for the sparrow, and clothes the lilies, and feeds the young lions who seek their meat from him, we are left to rely upon each other. Multitudes, indeed, are so destitute, so absolutely helpless that they must perish if they receive no support. This is the economy under which we are placed; and in it we perceive plainly that God means each of us to see a brother in every other human being, and that those who have earthly possessions shall be benefactors to those who have not.

This is God's ordinance; but the selfish and hard-hearted subvert and despise this ordinance. They violate it constantly, systematically. They do more. They teach others to arraign the wisdom and love of God's administration. "He that oppresseth the poor reproach-

eth his Maker." In this passage it is declared that he who refuses mercy to the poor, wrongs and oppresses him, and that he causes men to upbraid God's providential government with injustice, and we know, in fact, that no infidel or atheist can do half as much to diffuse impiety and atheism; especially if this sordid wretch be a professed Christian.

I will only add that the whole life and character of him who refuses to succor the poor, proclaim a settled contempt for the plainest precepts of the Bible. Are you rich? "Charge them that are rich in this world that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate." Are you poor? "I have shewed you all things, how that so laboring we ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." It was the poverty of the widow which made her mite a richer donation than the liberal offerings of the wealthy; and of the Corinthians it is recorded that "their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." Does conscience tell you that you have at any time thriven in your business by concealment and fraud? Let him that stole, steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."— Are you praying and striving after holiness? "Give alms of such things as ye have, and behold all things are clean unto you." Are you tempted to overlook the urgency of the wants of those who apply to you for help? "Say not to thy neighbor, Go and come again, when thou hast it by thee." Do you fast or pray? "Is not this the fast which I have chosen, that thou deal thy bread to the hungry, and when thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" "The angel said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up as a memorial before God." Is it your desire to have this testimony that you please God? "To do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Would you secure heavenly consolations for those hours when yours shall be the shattered health, and the hollow cough, when wearisome nights shall be

appointed unto you, and days of languor and wasting disease? "Blessed is he that considereth the poor, the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble; the Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing; thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness." In short, would you lay up treasures in heaven?" "Sell that thou hast and give unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations." Passages like these could be multiplied indefinitely; but all these admonitions, counsels, plain solemn commands, the man before us despises, defies, tramples under foot.

Considered, then, with reference to the Being whom we ought to glorify in all our actions, you see the cool atrocity of the conduct portrayed in this part of the parable. And do not pass this truth hastily, and without reflecting on the real character of that selfishness which Jesus here exposes. For my part; the more I analyze it, the more clearly do I perceive that selfishness is the essence of all sin in men and devils. A selfish man discards the will of God which is the only safeguard to the peace, order, happiness of the universe, and resolves that his own will shall predominate. If unrestrained, he would immolate the whole world to his cupidity. Nay, as only one supremely selfish being could ever be gratified, he would, if it were possible, seek to make all worlds tributary to his lust for dominion. Nor would he be satisfied with even this. His inordinate spirit would aim at the throne of Jehovah himself, and be restless until not only the creation but the Creator were subjected to his insane ambition.

Having examined the character of the selfish and heartless man in the relation he sustains towards God, let us now view it in another aspect,—with reference to his fellow men. In this view observe the unnaturalness, the flagrant injustice of his conduct.

Descended from a common parentage, involved in the same fall—like shipwrecked mariners cast upon a desert island, exposed to the same dangers and miseries—what monsters are we if no sympathy nor commiseration for each

other touches our hearts. "And when he saw him he passed by on the other side." Wretch! it is a brother's form which lies there naked and weltering in gore. It is a brother's eye which turns so imploringly to you. It is a brother's voice which pierces your ear. He sees, he hears, but turns his back and steels his soul against all. "He passed by on the other side;" but on what side could he pass, and so stop up the access and passage to mercy, that no compunctious visitings of nature might arrest and soften him?

And this conduct is as unjust as it is unnatural—a truth this to which I ask your attention. For those who harden their hearts against the claims of charity generally pique themselves upon their honesty, their high sense of honor, while at the tribunal of impartial equity, they are guilty of the grossest injustice.

Injustice, because when possessions exceeding our real necessities are multiplied in our hands, we are bound to regard them as deposits made by God, to whom all things belong, and who thus constitutes us his stewards and almoners.

Injustice, because poverty is not an accident; it is God's appointment. "The poor shall not cease out of the land;" this is a prophecy which ever has been and ever shall be fulfilled in every age and nation. "The poor ye have always with you." Whenever and wherever men are gathered together in communities, cities, villages, the declaration will hold good, that "the rich and the poor meet together, and the Lord is the maker of them all." And in this unequal distribution of earthly allotments, we see clearly that those who hold a surplus of worldly goods, hold them in trust for those who are destitute; and that society is based upon this implied compact.

There was room enough in the universe for God to create and place us apart from each other in separate and selfish isolation; but he has ordained a social destination which causes us to touch each other, to be knit closely to each other. And in making poverty one of the elements of society, he designs that the noblest charities of our nature shall have full scope, and that we shall thus resemble him as angels cannot, in the divine prerogative of imparting beneficence to the needy and afflicted.

And so solemn is this obligation, so crying and decisive a test of character is our conduct as to this duty, that in the programme of the last judgment furnished by Jesus, we find the single inquest will be upon this specification. If it then appears that we pitied, visited, relieved the poor, the Judge will say, "Come ye blessed of my Father." But if we have been perfidious to the trust committed to us, if we have imbezzled the sums invested with us for the poor and suffering, if we did not feel for them and succor them, woe unto us. Vainly shall we then plead our faith, and prayers, and zeal for religion. Do you suppose that this priest did not make long prayers, and profess great faith, and glow with zeal for his creed? Our piety will then be exposed in its true colors, as the religion of a mercenary spirit, which after making riches its idol here, hopes, by a few cheap observances, by an orthodoxy that costs nothing, that flatters and pampers its reigning covetousness, to secure riches in heaven.

I have thus spoken of the priest and the class he represents, and you feel how detestable is the character here portrayed by the Saviour. Indeed, my brethren, only suppose a community entirely composed of such members. Suppose that each should seek to satisfy only his own wants; that each should stand aloof in lonely, repulsive misanthropy; that each should view the miseries of others with cold indifference, if not with secret complacency; that each (for selfishness stops at nothing; it will not only abandon the wounded man, but will search his pockets to see if anything is left) should practice the infernal art of turning to advantage a brother's misfortunes—availing himself of a brother's calamities to extort from him exorbitant, oppressive, barbarous profits. The bare supposition of a community like this shocks and revolts our nature; yet such would be society, if its members all resembled this priest. If all were like him, it were far better to dwell in deserts than in the abodes of men; no ties would then bind human beings together, but those of avarice, envy, rapacity; and pestilence, famine, war could add but little horror to the universal, prolific blight and curse resting upon the earth.

The priest;—the selfish and heartless. And such

characters are not only found among us in this city, but are treated with respect. Money purchases for them an homage which I would much rather give to the wolf and the hyena. Since God made them, we must let them pass for men. But I utter simply what I feel when I say, that such men ought not to be permitted to live in any civilized community. When I consider how plainly we were formed for mutual affection and aid; how—from the moment when an infant is folded in the arms of love, to that in which the soothing ministries of friendship raise the dying head and wipe the cold damps of death from the throbbing brow—we crave and must have each other's sympathies; and that the human race would become extinct, if all had the heart of these monsters; I do not hesitate to affirm that such miscreants ought to be driven forth from the habitations of men, and be banished to the haunts of wild beasts, their proper, congenial associates.

II. From the class who find their type in the priest, let us now pass to the second class, who are condemned in the parable; those represented by the Levite; people who concur warmly with us while we denounce the unfeeling and inhuman, yet practically imitate them; and who—though far less odious in the sight of men—are almost as criminal in the eye of God.

At first it may perhaps seem to you that there was really no difference between the priest and the Levite; but the narrative presents traits which clearly distinguish them from each other. The priest no sooner saw the disfigured form and oozing blood, than instantly he hurried away. The Levite, says the Saviour, "when he was at the place came and looked on him." The sight of such misery causes him to approach. He is touched; his better feelings have triumphed; he is about to alight and minister to the wretched victim of midnight assassins—Suddenly, however, he checks himself. Some counterthought, some plea, some prudential reflection, some precaution occurs to his mind. Whatever the reason, he does nothing; all his benevolence is chilled, and he, too, turns away and passes by on the other side.

In sensibility and pity the Levite, then, was superior to the priest; but only in these; and I fear the class he represents is a large class, and that too many in all our churches, too many in the present audience belong to it.

Who, indeed, is ignorant of what generally takes place on occasions like this? Who ever pleaded such a cause as that which now appeals to your hearts, without being conscious that he has but one thing to fear? My beloved hearers, let me speak plainly to you. After nearly eighteen years constant intercourse with you, in the pulpit, and out of it, I ought to know you well; and I do not mean to flatter you when I express my entire conviction that there is not one here who resembles the priest. But the Levite,—feelings, commiseration, sympathy, all evaporating in pretexts—do not too many of you bear a very striking likeness to the Levite?

At the judgment, it seems, there will not be a single excuse offered; the only answer will be, "Lord, when?" "Lord, where?" Now, however, no charity can be presented, but all begin to make excuses—excuses advanced with confidence, and which, therefore, fidelity to your souls, as well as to the cause I am advocating, requires me to examine, that we may see what they are really worth.

I am to examine the pleas most commonly urged, and I take, first, that of inability;—a plea which we hear every day, and from almost everybody; and yet which I venture to say none of us will dare to mention before the bar of God.

For, my friends, might I not appeal to your candor, whether you make this reply to the solicitations of pleasure and fashion, of your appetites and passions? whether your inability has caused you to retrench the expenses of your dress, your table, your carnal indulgences? Might I not inquire whether others, less able than you are, do not contribute constantly and cheerfully to the interests of humanity? And there is another question which I ought to submit to you. If I do not, it is because I am anxious to propitiate your good wishes and liberality today, and I remember Solomon's remark, that "the poor useth entreaty, but the rich answereth roughly." I know

too well how ready we all are to take offence at a beggar, unless he speak with bated breath and whispering humbleness, and to find in his want of obsequiousness, a reason for rejecting his suit. I do not therefore ask you, but you ought to ask yourself, Why it is, that you are so poor only on occasions like the present? At all other times you are unwilling to be regarded as in such straitened circumstances; you magnify your property; and by a certain air and manner, you wish to impose upon the world by representing yourself as worth much more than you really possess. How is it that you have so little only when solicited by the calls of charity?

But passing these and similar questions, as unbecoming me now, let me beseech you to weigh this excuse in the balances of impartial truth. Conceding this plea of inability to some, are you among them? Is it a fact that you have barely enough for your subsistence? If situations were reversed, and you were suffering from want, would you consider this plea as proper from one in your present circumstances? In fine, you are unable to give, you have "nothing over and above." But over and above what? Your real wants? or your pleasures? your irregular desires? the cravings of your passions? your undue conformity to the world? your inordinate love of accumulation? in a word, your sins? These are points upon which I may question you without exciting your displeasure. At least they are matters about which God will one day bring you to a strict reckoning, whether it pleases you or not.

Well, well, I admit all you say. I have something more than a mere sufficiency for the present, but what then? Am I not right in securing myself against the future? At least is it not my duty to make some provision for my children? This is your second plea; but what a plea? especially what a plea from the lips of a Christian?

For if the possibility of future casualties releases us from the duty of charity, who is bound to give? Are not all liable to calamities? Were not the priest and Levite, travelling on the very road so infested by robbers, exposed to danger?

Moreover, whatever our precautions, God alone can preserve us from the day of adversity. Many may say, We *do* not want; but in all the earth there is only one man who can say "I *shall* not want." It is he who knows that the Lord is his shepherd. Now if God alone can avert the evils we dread, is it wise to provoke him by violating the plainest duty? We are commanded to "honor the Lord with our substance," and are assured that "he who giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord;" can we do better against any possible emergency, than to invest with God upon these invitations and promises?— And after all, what does God demand of us? Does he say to us, as Jesus did to the rich nobleman, "Sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor?" He requires only some inconsiderable portion of your means; and you refuse this on the pretext, that you may meet with some disaster at a future day.

But ought I not to make some provision for my children? and thus to protect them from the humiliations and miseries and temptations of dependence? Be it so. I acquiesce. Is this, however, all your desire? No. You are toiling to bequeath wealth to your children. This is your ambition, an ambition that will increase with your possessions. For, let avarice take this form, and it is an insatiable, incurable passion. Disguised, consecrated as parental love, it will at once be an absorbing lust, and stifle every benevolent feeling in your bosoms; its dominion will become more inexorable with advancing years; and death will find you scheming, laboring, engrossed with anxious cares, hardening your heart against every appeal of charity, that you may entail upon your offspring riches which will almost certainly be a curse to them, exempting them from the necessity of self-reliance and industry, filling them with pride, vanity, an insane independence of God, nourishing effeminacy, sensuality, irreligion, and delivering them up as victims to the unsearchable seductions of pernicious associations. Is this your affection for your children? Would it not be a far better provision, to secure for them the favor of that Being who will watch over them when you are gone? "I have been young," says the Psalmist, "and now am

old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." Why not? We are informed in the next verse. "He is ever merciful and lendeth, and his seed is blessed."

But the great number of these applications:—this is your third plea. And I might dispose of this in a very summary way, by simply replying, What then? Is this a reason why you should give to none of these objects?—Ah, what would become of you, if God should act thus? if he should exclude you, because such multitudes cry unto him daily? or if he should be weary of the "continual coming" with which you have to supplicate his compassion, and refuse any longer to hear you?

This, however, is not the only, nor the true answer to this excuse. To expose it, we must consider what it supposes. It really assumes that you have already given all which you ought to give; but are you prepared to affirm this? Make the calculation, and decide this matter for yourself. In the first place, deduct those donations, which cannot, by any self-deception, be styled charity; those I mean which were only bids for public applause, or in which love, obedience to God was not the motive. Strike out all these, then take what remains and measure it by the standard of the Bible. Compare it with the liberality of the first Christians, who gave all they possessed for the support of the indigent.

Or, if you regard their conduct as a holy excess, which I grant it was,—compare your contributions with a standard to which you cannot object, that, namely, which was prescribed to the Jews, from whom God exacted a tariff for religious purposes, amounting in the aggregate to one-third of their annual income. Judged by this divine regulation, how does this plea appear?

I am well aware, my brethren, that the Gospel does not prescribe any such rule, any rule at all for us; but it is for a reason which ought to inflame our souls and constrain us to the noblest munificence. Before the sacrifice on Calvary, God was exact, he arranged everything, enforced everything as to the sums to be given in behalf of religion and benevolence. Since that amazing deed of love, he makes no rules, he enjoins no amounts, he seems

to regard it as unworthy of Christians that any sum should be assessed upon them, he simply points to the cross and says, "Ye know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich," and he leaves it to our own hearts to impose the law of love which has superseded the law of compulsion, and to prescribe the limits to our charity.

Yes, all is now confided to our hearts. Jesus leaves it to our gratitude to determine the measure of our liberality. Can we abuse this confidence, and in the multiplied wants and miseries of our race, find a motive for our covetousness?

After all, however, where there are so many solicitations, are we not bound to be prudent in the bestowal of our charities? and to discriminate carefully between objects so numerous? Unquestionably. I fully concur in this view. In fact, it is upon this very argument that I rest the claims of the Society which solicits your contributions. I will not, therefore, consider it separately, but, uniting it with our last article, I will abridge the discussion and so finish this discourse.

III. Yes, my hearers, when you appeal to me, whether there is not great danger of imposition, and if it be not our duty to distinguish cautiously between the different objects which are presented, I answer, Certainly; and behold the simplest of all issues upon which I am willing to leave the case I am advocating. You all know the members of this benevolent association, you are well acquainted with these Christian women. If now you believe them capable of any deception———but no, I will not insult them, nor offend you, by the supposition;—if, however, you believe them wanting in judgment and diligence, if you really fear that they will misapply your liberalities, if, in a word, you do not regard them as entirely qualified to be the almoners of your bounty;—then reject the suit I am urging; do more, rise up and pronounce their condemnation. But you will not, cannot do this. These ladies have your full, unbounded confidence; and, as I said, I might safely rest the cause

here, not doubting that you will, by your conduct, assure them not only of your esteem, but of your cordial approbation.

I feel, however, that to leave the cause here will not be doing it justice; it would be to place it only on a footing with many other noble enterprises; whereas I venture to affirm that few charities combine so many excellences; at least it is certain that none can correspond more exactly to all the qualities of that benevolence which the Saviour here so strongly recommends; as to which he says to each of us, "Go thou, and do likewise."

For what is the first trait in the charity of the Samaritan? It is *Disinterestedness.* His kindness was to a stranger; one whom he had probably never seen before, and who had upon him no other claim than that he was a man and a sufferer. And to-day you are invited to imitate him in this quality of mercy. Your generous aid is sought for those whom you do not know—for the poor, the aged, the diseased, the wretched sons and daughters of affliction and want, pining in comfortless abodes, shivering with cold, stretched upon beds of languishing.

What is the next trait in the charity of the Samaritan? *It is its catholic spirit.* Too often our donations only prove our sectarian zeal; and are offered, not under the influence of our love to Jesus and humanity, but under the influence of party prejudice or pride. In the parable Jesus designs especially to guard against this spirit. Hence he selects a Samaritan—one of a people hated by the Jews for their heresies—as the benefactor of the wounded Jew. And here again this enterprise breathes the very love which Jesus commends. In their visits and deeds of mercy, these ladies know nothing of sects or parties. Enough for them that human beings are in distress; and that they can minister to their wants, and, by prayer and counsel, can lead them to Jesus and salvation.

The third characteristic of the Samaritan's charity, which Jesus enjoins and I beseech you to copy, is *its generosity.* Upon this point Paul uses a phrase full of meaning, I had almost said, of irony. He speaks of a giving which is a matter of "covetousness;" and we see the force of his remark. A man who refuses to give may

be a liberal man who does not approve of the cause; but by giving, a man acknowledges the excellence of the object; and if the sum contributed be grossly disproportioned to his means, he gives the strongest proof of the mean love of filthy lucre which stifles all noble feelings in his bosom. Measured by the Saviour's rule in the case of the widow and her mite, the conduct of the Samaritan was munificent. For though on a journey, he stops; he pours into the wounds the oil and wine provided for his own use; he sets the wounded man upon his beast, and, walking by his side, carries him to the nearest inn, where he remains all that day and night nursing him. Nor does this satisfy him. He leaves a sum of money—probably all he had, with the host;—and, bidding him to take care of his guest, he pledges himself, without stint, to repay any expenses incurred for his relief and comfort.

I will only add, that the charity of the Samaritan was as prompt, as it was disinterested and generous. Many feel for the poor and suffering, and mean to succor them; but they delay the remedy until the patient dies. With them evil is wrought, not by want of heart, but of thought. What a contrast in the active beneficence here commended; for, though it was most inconvenient, the heart of the Samaritan would defer nothing; he acts at once. And if ever it was true, that he who delays refuses, while he gives twice who gives quickly, it is so to-day; for this noble work of mercy must cease, unless it be at once and liberally patronized.

My friends, this last thought is so important, that I desire to leave it impressed upon your minds. I am aware that rich men, who do very little during life, sometimes make some reparation in a dying hour; and of course, charitable legacies are to be commended. But in every view it is far better to be our own executors of such bounties. I repeat that I admire those bequests which are made for purposes of benevolence, and I blush as I think that men of the world, even infidels, have, by such acts, caused thousands to bless their memories, while professed Christians so often cling, even on their death-beds, to that lust which starves the soul here, and

damns it in eternity. After all, however, there is generally something suspicious in this tardy, posthumous charity. A man devotes his whole life to the acquisition of money, hoarding it with sordid avarice; and yields to the painful necessity of parting with a portion of it, only when death violently relaxes his gripe upon all. If this be charity, what is covetousness? Such a man virtually confesses that his heart is as base as ever, that were it possible, he would still be as grasping as ever. No it is not charity he feels, it is only a craven terror which extorts a reluctant sacrifice. Or rather, it is the same low, mercenary ruling passion of his life, which now, when he can no longer speculate and invest upon earth, seeks to speculate and invest in heaven.

How much wiser, happier he who, by cheerful, generous giving, enlarges his own soul, elevates his own character; and, by habitual deeds of mercy bestowed out of a heart glowing with gratitude to Jesus and love to mankind, provides for himself "treasure in the heavens which faileth not, where no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth," secures the fulfillment of that promise, "They cannot recompense thee, but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." *He transported his fortune to heaven and has gone there to enjoy it.*" This was the noble epitaph written upon the tomb of Atolus of Rheims. What a contrast between such a fine eulogium and the comments, may I not say the satires, we every day hear at the funerals of our rich men—some of them Christian men, so called.

"*He left a large fortune.*" He left it. How melancholy that he had to leave it. He toiled for it day and night. He amassed it from the smallest beginnings, and by the severest thrift. It was all his care and thought. He loved it and he loved to increase it. It was hard to part with it; but he has gone. He sent none of it before him by his charities. He carried none of it with him. He left it all. He might have acted more wisely, might have remitted large sums before him to enrich him on his arrival. Over and over, had the invitations and promises of God been urged upon his attention. "Blessed are the merciful, for

they shall receive mercy." "Give and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, and running over." "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he shall cry himself and not be heard." These and similar truths he well knew, and every day opportunities were offered him to lay up enduring riches, to become rich toward God." But he was absorbed in laying up treasure on earth. And he has been compelled to leave it and go into eternity, like Dives, too poor to buy a drop of cold water to cool his parched tongue.

But I will not detain you longer. I leave the case with you. That you will give, I have no doubt. This, however, does not satisfy me; for the winter is already upon us with almost unprecedented severity, and the funds of the Society are entirely exhausted. Unless, therefore, the sums you contribute exceed those usually received on occasions like this, we shall be compelled to appeal to you again. And though this might not weary you, it would be most painful to us. Relieve us from such a necessity. Terminate our importunity, by terminating our wants.

Let the response you give to our petition be such as these noble women have a right to expect. Toil, fatigue, exposure, care, pain they are ready to welcome. They look to you to bid them God-speed, and to give them such an outfit as shall enable them to go as angels of mercy to the hovels of the destitute and wretched. Let your liberality be worthy of such a cause. Let it be worthy of yourselves, of all I have known of you from the moment I became your pastor. Let it be such as becomes this sanctuary. It was with reason that the cripple was laid at the gate of the temple to ask alms; for, entering there to supplicate God's mercy, their prayers taught all who passed to render deeds of mercy. To-day the poor, the aged, the sick, the halt, the blind, lie not at the gate, but in the temple itself. To-day this sanctuary is converted into an almshouse. Through their representatives these miserable objects of compassion stretch out their hands to you; and Jesus, putting them in his place, says, "The poor ye have always with you." "Inasmuch as ye do it unto them, ye do it unto

me." Who can refuse anything to such an appeal, presented in such a place?

Lastly—death, and the judgment after death; give in view of these. When death shall be closing your eyes to all earthly things, of how little real profit will appear all you have gained, and spent, and laid up for yourself; what ineffable consolation in remembering anything done for Christ and for the cause of humanity. When Elliott, the missionary, was dying he said, "Charity never faileth; my strength fails me, my sight fails me, my life fails me; but the charities which the grace of God led me to give failed me not." And Baxter, on his dying bed, quoted that remark and added, "Such, too, is my experience now. I have laboured much, I have written much, I have preached much; but I cannot think of these. It is only the charity I have given which I can recall with pleasure, with thankfulness to God." What touching commentaries these upon that promise, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor, the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble, the Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing; thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness."

My dearly beloved brethren and friends, let us so act to-day, and in all our future lives, that we may lay up in store for our dying chambers these peaceful recollections, these divine supports, these heavenly consolations. Let us do more. Let us so act to-day, and in all our future lives, that when the great white throne shall be spread, and before the gathered multitudes around that throne, the Judge shall say to us, Inasmuch as ye did it unto these, ye did it unto me. I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

May God grant us grace thus to act and live. May he thus crown the deeds his grace inclined and enabled us to perform. To Him be honor, and glory, and majesty, forever. AMEN.

Sermon Sixth.

WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH JESUS?

"What shall I do then with Jesus?"—MATTHEW xxvii: 22.

YOU are familiar with the occasion of this question. Jesus stood before the Roman governor, and before the priests and the people as one who had attracted universal attention, who had asserted his title to the highest honors, even those which are the peculiar prerogative of Deity. For thus making himself equal with God, he had been arrested, and Pilate must make some disposition of his case. He wishes to discharge him, declaring that neither Herod nor himself could find any fault in him. The popular voice, however, demands his crucifixion.

As it was customary to liberate some prisoner at the paschal feast, the Roman governor proposes to release Jesus; but the chief priests (when was there ever a persecution except at the instigation of priests?) "persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas and destroy Jesus." In this dilemma, Pilate proposes the question I have read as our text, "What shall I do then with Jesus?"

Men and brethren, the hour hastens on when Jesus will have to do with each of us at his awful tribunal.—"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." "Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." I do not wonder that, in view of the solemn retributions of that hour, Paul, praying for his beloved Onesiphorus, forgets everything else and exclaims, "The Lord grant that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day." In that day

what will Jesus do with us? Nor need we be at a loss to answer this enquiry; for the decision then is suspended upon the practical reply we give to the question now submitted to each of us, What are you doing, what will you do with Jesus?

I. I have said that Jesus stood before the governor and the Jews as one who had attracted universal attention; and thus he stands before us. "Behold the man!" exclaimed Pilate. For eighteen centuries the world has been beholding the man. For eighteen centuries he has been the object of the profoundest interest to human minds and hearts. For nearly eighteen centuries he has been the centre and source of the most potent influences which have disturbed, agitated, upheaved society. Of these influences, all that can be properly ascribed to him have been most benignant. They have banished idolatry, barbarism, cruelty, vice, misery; and have diffused light, hope, peace, purity, happiness. And those baleful influences which have been unjustly imputed to him, (for we have too much cause to exclaim, O Religion! what crimes have been perpetrated in thy name!)—these proclaim with almost greater emphasis, how vast, how resistless is the power he sways over the world.

Now here is a remarkable fact, what will you do with it? This fact is, that more than eighteen hundred years ago, there appeared on the platform of human affairs a Being who, as to his outward conditions was a poor, obscure, unlettered Hebrew youth; that his whole life,—thoughts, words, actions,—was a mysterious exception to the laws which prevail among the children of men; that he was not only sinless by the confession of his enemies who closely watched him, and by the testimony of his friends who were constantly with him, but that his character and doctrines placed him unapproachably above all who ever bore our humanity; that his ministry was very brief—only three years; that, though he devoted himself constantly to "doing good," the world could not endure him, hated him, murdered him; that in all succeeding ages his influence has not only mingled in the concerns of humanity, but has been their grand controlling element. This is the fact, what will you do with it?

You must do something with it. You cannot get rid of it. It meets the historian in all his researches. When he explores the literature, laws, customs, morals of civilized nations, he discovers great diversities; they are modified by climate, by hereditary prejudices, by veneration for ancestral sanctities, by differences in forms of government; but this great fact pervades them all. So it is, somehow or other so it has got to be, that Jesus is found penetrating the library in which the scholar trims his midnight lamp, the studio where the artist spreads his canvass or moulds the plastic marble, and giving tone and character to their compositions; that he invades senate chambers and halls of legislation, and frames the statutes enacted there; that he presides in courts of justice, and shapes their decisions; that he dictates in cabinets and prescribes decrees to kings and emperors; that he enters palaces and hovels, and impresses himself upon the habits and conduct of rulers, nations, peoples everywhere.

And what the historian detects in his investigations we all feel. Even those who reject the saving efficacy of the Gospel, who have no hope of gaining its eternal rewards, at once, almost unconsciously confess that the principles of the Gospel ought to govern men in their lives; just as the mariner who never expects to possess the North Star, knows that he must guide his vessel by its light. The moralist admits that they are the only foundation of virtue; the statesman, that they are the only basis of national prosperity and safety; and princes and potentates—though wicked men—appeal to these principles as the highest law, as the law of all laws, as final and conclusive with reference to all the enterprises, reformations, revolutions they undertake.

Now here is a marvellous thing, a most striking phenomenon, what will you do with it? how can you explain it? As Pilate had to dispose of Jesus in some way, so we have to dispose of this singular anomaly. At this day it is too late to say that you will do nothing with it. You must have to do with it. For this is no trifle, it is a matter of infinite, urgent importance, and it pursues you, compasses you, confronts you everywhere with inexorable earnestness and importunity.

If you return to your homes, Jesus is there, meddling with everything dearest to your heart; he is in the old family Bible on the stand; he is in the hymn book on your table; he is in the volumes ranged along your library; he is in the nursery among your children; your aged mother speaks to you of Jesus, and tells you what he has been to her during her long pilgrimage; your wife falls at the feet of Jesus and loves and worships him; even the infant at your knees lisps the name of Jesus and clasps its little hands in prayer to him. Indeed you would be shocked if Jesus were not in your house, shedding his influence there. If you visit the schools where the intellectual, social, moral character of your family is forming, Jesus is there. If you repair to places of business—whatever may be the secret turnings, windings, shiftings of their practical negotiations, all men agree that their transactions ought to be regulated by his laws. And then Sabbaths, and churches, and pulpits, and Sunday schools and every benevolent association, and every charitable institution—in all these Jesus encounters you, meets you as the pervading, animating soul of all. How do you account for this? How has he come to be thus blended in all our pursuits, interests, joys, sorrows, hopes? There is no law of the land conferring this sovereignty upon him; yet here he is before us, around us, within us exerting this sovereignty, and none durst ask him, Who art thou? whence hast thou this power? who gave thee this authority? We feel his power, we acquiesce in it instinctively and of course.

I am well aware that, at remote intervals, some mere human actor on the stage of the world has, for a little brief season, drawn upon himself the eyes of men, and engaged their admiration and homage; but these honors have been rendered by only a limited portion of mankind, and they can be easily explained. They have been won by exalted position, or by surpassing genius, or by armies and fleets, by victories whose splendor has for a while dazzled the bleared vision of fallen depraved humanity.

Just the reverse of all this is true as to the supremacy of Jesus. All observation shows that, if a man of transcendent power arise in one nation, other nations

immediately begin to regard his movements with jealousy; and by diplomacy, by detraction, by war, they seek to cripple his influence,—shrewdly suspecting—nay knowing certainly, that such greatness is sure to foster a restless and dangerous ambition. But all civilized nations cheerfully recognize the sovereignty of Jesus. As to him the only rivalry among princes is, who shall be styled the most Christian, and they vie with each other in blazoning upon their escutcheons, flags and banners, the emblems of their loyalty.

And he has established this invisible throne with no earthly resources, with all human agencies banded against him. Without wealth, without arms, without intrigue or violence; with the wealth, the arms, the intrigue and violence of the whole world in deadly hostility to him, he has triumphed gloriously. The empires founded by Alexander, Charlemagne, Napoleon soon crumbled away, but in each succeeding age Jesus has been extending his kingdom. At this day he reigns in the hearts of millions who would die for him; and even where his spiritual sceptre is not acknowledged, with the exception of countries still sunk in the darkness of paganism, the entire population of the earth confesses the imperial influence of him who is shaping the growing stature of the world, who, holiest among the mighty, and mightiest among the holy, hath, with his pierced hand hurled dynasties from their old foundations and is ruling the spirit of the ages. Such, indeed, is this tacit concession of his power, so commensurate with the progress of mankind, that in all classical vocabularies, *Christianity* and *Civilization* mean the same thing.

I do not think that the advocates of the Gospel have availed themselves sufficiently of this argument. It is entirely unanswerable. Men may cavil and carp, but it will cost something more than a sneer to set aside this fact. Here it is, surrounding, pressing them like the atmosphere, and mocking to scorn all their shallow, ribald flippancies. It is on all hands admitted, that since the mysterious birth at Bethlehem a new moral power has been at work, gradually but irresistibly vanquishing opposition, and changing, elevating humanity. Since that

event the truth is that men have been inhabiting a new world. How are we to account for this fact? At first, when Jesus and his apostles began to assert his pre-eminent glory, I grant that the burden of proof was upon them. No one was bound to receive him until he had shown sufficient cause; and the demand of the people was very reasonable. "What signs showest thou, then, that we may see and believe thee? What dost thou work?" But now the burden of proof is thrown upon the opposers of the Gospel. They must explain how Jesus has achieved these triumphs. They have been eighteen hundred years trying to solve this problem, and confess that they have failed.

Gamaliel well said, "If this counsel or this work be of man, it will come to nought." Has it came to nought? Is there one in this audience who will pretend that it was of men? Not one. Not one. The very idea is preposterous. What, he, all whose doctrines assailed and condemned the most cherished passions and prejudices of every class, won this triumph by human devices; he who possessed no earthly resources, conquered by human contrivances. No, and again, No. There is but one single way out of this dilemma, and the Jewish "doctor of the law" hit it when he added, "If it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it." The ancient oracle throws a flood of light upon the mysterious potency of this adorable Being. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Yes, Jesus is the Christ, the great promised deliverer, "the Desire of all nations," the predicted "seed of the woman" who should bruise the serpent's head"—who has bruised and will go on bruising Satan under his feet. In the mind, the conscience, the heart the deepest and most crying wants of humanity, he was and is felt to be the light, the truth, the Good lost but now recovered. And if this be so, what will you do then with Jesus? O guilt, madness worse than brutish to reject him. Are you capable of this infatuation? Will you, can you imitate the Jews and cry out, "Away with him, away with him, cru-

cify him, crucify him," and by your conduct mock him, and smite him, and spit upon him, and crucify to yourselves the Son of God and put him to an open shame?

II. But, my brethren, when Pilate proposed the enquiry in our text, Jesus not only stood before the multitude as an object of universal attention, he was also a Being invested with every interest which can arrest and subdue the most obdurate soul. "Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said, "Behold the man." To day, not only this amazing spectacle, but all the dismal tragedy which followed is repeated in our midst and before our eyes. And, now, what will you do with this injured, crucified Jesus?

In making this assertion do not think I am drawing upon your imaginations; I am only stating what the Bible expressly declares. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you." What does the Holy Spirit teach us by this language? These Galatians lived at a distance from Jerusalem where the Saviour suffered, nor does the apostle refer at all to their presence at that scene. In whatever sense it was said to these Galatians, it may also be said to us, that "Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you;" for it is manifest that the declaration recognizes the ministry of the Gospel by preaching and by the ordinances, as effectually bringing us in contact with the great sacrifice for sin offered upon Calvary.

I say the ministrations of the pulpit. By these "Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified among you." For the crucifixion and all its retinue of suffering and blood are truths, the great facts on which the entire Gospel hinges: and with which mere bodily presence and vision had nothing to do. If we believe them, they enter and remain in our minds, we are conversant with them as grand moral elements; nor could our convictions nor their power receive any accession from the aid of our senses. God who formed the physical organs to take in outward objects, has endowed us with faculties by which

we reason upon evidence and rest upon certainty. It is because preaching is God's ordinance that we "magnify our office" and venture to tell you, that you have no right to listen to Christ's ministers as to other speakers.—Supposing you to regard them as commissioned by heaven, why then their messages are "not the words of man, but of God;" they "speak as the oracles of God." They may be enriched with glorious gifts, or may be destitute of the graces and eloquence of the orator; but the excellency of the treasure depends not at all upon the earthen vessels which convey it. Paul renounced the arts of oratory, that the faith of his hearers should not "stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."—Preaching is a divine ordinance. I have sometimes heard people say, We can read better sermons at home. I might ask such persons, whether this is the cause of their absence from the sanctuary; and whether they spend their time reading these edifying discourses? whether he who has piety enough to enjoy spiritual exercises at home, has not too much piety to stay at home when God commands us "not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together?" This, however, only by the way. What I would impress upon you is, that the living ministry is an ordinance of the Gospel; and as well therefore, may you neglect baptism under the pretence that you can bathe in purer water at home, or slight the supper because you have better bread and wine at home. Preaching is God's ordinance. But, now, what is the design of preaching? It is to "set forth Christ crucified among you;" it is to deliver to you that which we "also received how that Christ died for our sins." Preaching is the divinely instituted appointment by which you are to be placed among those who thronged Pilate's judgment hall, to be carried to mount Calvary and there to have your gaze fixed upon that amazing altar, that bleeding victim. "*I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified,*"—this is the abridgment of all our doctrine. "*Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world,*"—there is the whole of our message.

And the same great truth is proclaimed by the ordinances of the Gospel. One design of baptism is to keep

before us the sacrificial death of the Redeemer. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death." And in the supper the consecrated memorials revive and perpetuate the agony of the cross with such energy and pathos, that it may be truly said to us, "Christ Jesus is evidently set forth crucified among you."

To-day, then, this Jesus stands before you as he stood before Pilate and the people. To-day, your gaze is settled upon him as he hangs pale, and bleeding, expiring upon the cross. And turning upon you his dying eyes, he this day utters that touching invocation, "Is it nothing to you? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto that wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." My friends, are you men? are you women? —and can your souls continue unmoved by such an appeal? It is no metaphor, it is a plain thing which the apostle affirms when he proposes the question, "Who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth?" For, supposing your minds to be rational, and the play of human feelings to be free in your bosoms, it is impossible that you should either discard an object so absorbing in interest, or that, if you admit it into your souls, you should not confess its strange, mysterious, transforming power. What will you do, then, with Jesus? "His blood be upon us and upon our children," exclaimed the infuriated populace. Will you adopt this horrible imprecation? You shudder at the very thought. His blood be upon us and upon our children, not, however, to curse, but to bless, to purify, to save!—such is the Christian's prayer. What is yours? How will you treat this adorable Saviour? What will you do with Jesus?—with this Lamb of God thus led to the slaughter for you?

III. A third enquiry is suggested by what I have just said; it refers to the mediatorial claims of Jesus. He suffered—stooped to poverty, to contempt, to bitter anguish, to a death the very thought of which fills the imagination with horror, to all the unknown agony of his soul—that he might establish these claims, "that he

might be Lord both of the dead and the living." What do you say to this demand? What will you do with Jesus who now asserts his right to this lordship over you?

Here again you must do something; you cannot evade the alternative of loyalty or disloyalty. Jesus himself declares there can be no neutrality. From the throne of God down to the nethermost hell, every moral being is either honoring or resisting his demands.

When he was upon earth demons openly abjured him and his authority; they "cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus thou Son of God?" And in all the gloomy regions of despair, devils and damned spirits gnash their teeth and blaspheme his name in impotent rage and hate.

When heaven was opened to the seer on Patmos he heard all the abodes of glory resounding with the merits of this adorable Being. "Every creature which is in heaven heard I saying, Blessing and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." The Eternal Father delights to crown with glory the august victor over death and the powers of darkness. "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." "Unto the Son he saith, thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." The angelic hosts bow in homage to the imperial conquerer. "I beheld and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches,

and wisdom, and strength, and honor and glory, and blessing."

Above all, the ransomed in glory forever fill the atmosphere with raptured strains, as they proclaim the regal supremacy of him that liveth, and was dead, and is alive again. "And they sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

What will you do with these claims of the glorified Jesus? Is there one here who will dispute his merits? Perish the impiety. O no. If we had a thousand hearts and lives they would be too few for this princely Redeemer. To him are due our reverence, gratitude, and love. It is our bounden duty to give him our faith and loyalty. We owe it to his amazing sacrifice of himself, to receive him with delight as a Saviour from sin. We wrong him, almost more than we do ourselves, every moment we neglect so great salvation. To him is due our prompt and unqualified obedience. Reason, conscience, every magnanimous, every honorable sentiment ought to compel us, with soft but resistless violence, to consecrate ourselves to his service. We ought to rejoice that the universe contains such a treasure, that he has inaugurated his glorious kingdom upon earth, and that he reigns and will forever reign in heaven.

Sinners, miserable captives of death and hell, what do you say to these claims? O, ye who have been bought with a price, ye who have been redeemed with the precious blood of the Son of God, to-day I press this solemn enquiry upon you. I point to the manger, the garden, the cross, and I ask, ought not the love of Christ to constrain you? Will you, can you repel this celestial suitor, and range yourselves among his enemies, and say, "We will not have this man to reign over us."

IV. One more thought. We not only have to determine what we will do with Jesus as a Being with whom we are in constant contact, who has endured so much for us, and who urges such incontestable claims, but we

have to settle the question with our affections, what we will do with him as an object clothed with every charm which can captivate the heart, with him as the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely. "To you that believe," says the apostle, "he is precious;" and in what light can we regard this amiable Redeemer, and not confess his peerless attractions?

Does the soul, conscious of its spirituality and immortality, cry out for God, for the living God? Jesus satisfies this want. Creation is glorious, but our minds, our hearts crave something more glorious; it is the Creator. We have reason to bless God for the facilities by which we can study the material world, and make all its elements tributary to our comfort and happiness; but our divinest powers are those by which we can extricate ourselves from matter, and, rising to the Father of our spirits, know and love and worship him. We are not all matter, we are spirit. We feel this spirituality. Even when most eagerly pursuing them, we carry within us the consciousness that our blessedness can never be found where we seek it, in objects beneath us; and we instinctively exclaim, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." In that word "Father" what heavenly truths, consolations, joys are folded up; and Jesus reveals the Father. "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." He is "Emmanuel, God with us," "God manifest in the flesh;"—and so manifested that our hearts give way before all this exhibition of love and tenderness; reverence for incarnate deity is softened into the sweetest, dearest affections which can enamour all the boundless capacities of our souls.

Then, how precious is he for all the inestimable blessings secured by his sufferings. This was the topic which caused the disciples going to Emmaus to say, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the way?" By his sufferings an innumerable company of our ruined race are rescued from the abysses of hell, and raised to all the privileges of the sons of God. By his sufferings, "unsearchable riches" of grace and glory are ours; we are made "partakers of the divine nature;" by nature children of wrath, we

become children of God, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away.

How precious is Jesus as "the consolation of Israel." It was by this title he was promised to patriarchs, prophets, kings; and the very anticipation of such a "mercy" caused their souls to run over with feelings of joy. It was for this "consolation of Israel" Simeon waited, and taking him up in his arms, feeling that life could offer nothing to detain his ravished spirit another moment, he exclaims, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace," and he is still the consolation of Israel to us. At what time the heart bows under a load of sin, groans under strong corruption, is sore pressed by temptation, is plucked and crushed by affliction—then, O then, how are all our glooms brightened, and every fear dispelled, and heavenly serenity and happiness breathed into our souls, as we lean our heads upon his bosom, and hear him whisper, "It is I, be not afraid;" "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thine iniquities for my name's sake," "A bruised reed I will not break, the smoking flax I will not quench." In such moments we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; we lose all sense of pain, and are conscious only of that peace which passeth all understanding; we know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; and taste the rapture of victory while still engaged in the conflict.

But I will never have done. I know not where to begin, where to end, when speaking of this precious Redeemer. Well does the apostle say that he "is all and in all" the precious things of the Gospel. If the Bible be precious, he "is all and in all" the Bible; the Bible is the "revelation of Jesus Christ." If pardon be precious, Christ "is all and in all" in our pardon; we are washed from our sins in his blood. If justification be precious, he "is all and in all" in our justification; we are "justified freely by his grace." If sanctification be precious, he "is all and in all" in our sanctification; we are "sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all." If redemption be precious, he "is all and in all"

in our redemption; we are "redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot and without blemish." Lastly, in the hour of death, in the day of judgment, in the blessedness of heaven, "Christ is all, and in all." When flesh and heart are failing, the believer can mock at death, can insult death, can say, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." In view of the dread tribunal, he triumphantly exclaims, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again." And through eternity the praises of Jesus shall be the theme of ceaseless hosannas, of ever deepening transport and raptures.

Yes, to them that believe he is precious, or as the original imports, he is preciousness itself. What is he to us? He is precious to all but the devils, the damned, and the unbelieving; what is he to us? "We love him, because he first loved us." We know his amazing love for us; do we love him in return? "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maranatha;" do we love the Lord Jesus Christ? Or is that dreadful curse resting upon us for not loving perfect incarnate Love itself? Mortals, men, women, what emotions are in your bosom toward this Jesus? You have minds to appreciate what is noble, souls to adore what is glorious, hearts to love what is amiable; and has he no charms for you? He said, "I if I be lifted up will draw all men, unto me;" do you feel no attractions drawing you to him who is his "Father's chief delight," whose are unsearchable riches of grace, in whom dwelleth all "the fullness" of that God who is the absolute uncreated Love? While the redeemed in heaven—and among them those once dear to you on earth—are celebrating his praises with extasy, can you heap such insult upon him as to renew the cry, "Not this man, but Barabbas?" will you prefer to Jesus some vile passion which robs you of real happiness now, and will plunge you into misery hereafter?

But it is time to bring these remarks to a close, and I finish by repeating the solemn question in the text and

demanding an answer. Men of the world, you must come to some definite conclusion upon this subject. You cannot thrust it from you. It appeals incessantly to every principle, every feeling in your breasts,—to your reasonable fears, to all your hopes for eternity, to every manly, generous, tender, grateful susceptibility. And what is your reply? What think you of Christ? You must think of him very soon and very seriously. What will you do with Jesus? In all your actions, your most secret thoughts, you have now to do with him, and "all things are naked and open before the eyes of him with whom you have to do." The hour is near at hand when you will have to do with him in a more fearful sense, to meet him face to face, to do with him alone, with him evermore. What will you do with him? *Do with him*, did I say? O what, what will you *do without him?* what, when affliction and anguish shall come upon you? what, when closing your eyelids in death? what, when appearing before the awful judgment seat?

Christians, my dearly beloved brethren, we have settled this matter—settled it once and forever; and with reason. For what has Jesus not done for us; what has he not done in us; what is he not to us; what will he not do with us, and be to us in that day when he shall take us to be with him to behold, and to share his glory. The question in the text we answered long ago, and each year, month, week, day—as we know more of this precious Saviour—we answer it with fresh emphasis, with increasing delight in the choice we have made. What will we do with Jesus? Why this, our inmost souls instinctively respond, we will do this: We will love him, serve him, honor him, adore him, while life and immortality endure.

Yes, we have throned him in our minds and hearts—the cynosure of our wondering thoughts—the monarch of our warmest affections, hopes, desires. This we have done. And the more we meditate upon his astonishing love, his amazing sacrifice, the more we feel that if we had a thousand minds, hearts, souls, we would crown him Lord of all. Living, we will live in him, for him, to him.—Dying, we will clasp him in our arms, and, with Simeon,

welcome death as the consummation of bliss. Nor to our longing aspirations has eternity any charm so ravishing as this, that there we shall meet him—this precious Jesus, without whom heaven would be only a scene of wearisome splendor (O black streets of gold, black trees of life, black river of life, black angels and archangels, if Jesus be not there!) that there we shall "see him as he is;" and that, with souls unstained by sin or frailty with eyes undimmed by a tear, with a gratitude and adoration which can know no intermission nor abatement,—our love, our ardors, our consecration perfected and perpetuated,—we shall cast our crowns at his feet, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb." "Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever." AMEN.

Sermon Seventh.

THE PENITENT OF NAIN.

"And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying. This man if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of women this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee, and he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty; and when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss, but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint, but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins which are many are forgiven; for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."—LUKE vii: 37—50.

"ALL flesh is grass, and all the glory of man is as the flower of grass; the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, *but the word of the Lord endureth forever.*" Yes, my brethren, while nations are convulsed, and thrones are subverted, and empires crumble—all their splendor shattered; while one generation with its schemes, fashions, discoveries, goeth, and another with new fashions, schemes, discoveries, cometh, the Bible is

unchanged, its instructions, warnings, consolations are for all nations and for all ages.

The passage just read as our text was written almost nineteen centuries ago, yet it appeals to our hearts as if recorded yesterday. And especially is this true of those features in this narrative to which I invite your attention and which will constitute the subject and division of our discourse.

I. The first thing I notice is the portrait of a true, evangelical penitent.

Because the three other evangelists relate that, at Bethany, Mary anointed the Saviour's feet, some have maintained that the history before us refers to the same event; thus, not only forgetting that the scene of our narrative is Nain, but shocking all our feelings by supposing that the gentle sister of Lazarus was unchaste. And because Mary of Magdala had been the unhappy victim of a fearful demoniacal possession from which Jesus emancipated her, others have taken it for granted that she was "the sinner" here introduced; and thus the fair fame of one of the purest, noblest saints in the Bible has been transmitted from age to age to be libelled by Magdalen associations and hospitals. The woman mentioned in our text lived in the city of Nain. We have no information as to her name or her preceding biography, except that she was unchaste; for such is the meaning of the term here translated "a sinner." Instead of gratifying the pruriency which would pry into her frailties and errors, the Gospel throws a veil over the passions, crimes, miseries of her previous life. She was a sinner, fallen, lost; but Jesus come to "seek and to save that which was lost." The Gospel was for sinners, the chief of sinners. And now see its effects upon her.

To comprehend her case fully, we must consider what is here implied, and what is expressly narrated. It is implied that she had already seen and heard Jesus, and had experienced the peace of that pardon which he came to bestow. She resided in Nain. Here Jesus had publicly raised from death the son of the widow; "and there came a fear on all, and they glorified God, saying,

that a great prophet is risen up amongst us, and that God hath visited his people." Here, before the people, Jesus had received the message which John had sent by two of his disciples; and in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits, and to many that were blind he gave sight; then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way and tell John what things ye have seen and heard, how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached, and blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." In fine, it was in Nain the Redeemer uttered that blessed invitation, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest; take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy and my burden is light." On one—on each of these occasions this woman had probably been present, and had been arrested and drawn to Christ. In the restoration of the young man, it may be that the Holy Spirit had opened her eyes to see her own deplorable condition as "dead in trespasses and sins," and had quickened her to life. If "the poor had the Gospel preached to them," she was poor indeed, and the Gospel was for her. And if the weary and heavy-laden were invited, who so weary, so heavy-laden, so bowed down under a burden of guilt, pollution, shame, as she? Where in the whole world was there a soul which so longed for rest, which so cried out for the sympathy, the compassion of a Saviour who was meek and lowly in heart? How sweet to exchange the galling yoke of the passions for his yoke which was easy. And compared with the bondage of sin, how light his burden;—a burden such as sails are to a ship, such as to a bird are the wings with which it springs from earth and soars to heaven.

She had heard Jesus. His words had breathed heavenly peace into her soul. And now observe her conduct. She must see him and tell him of the change he had wrought in her, and pour out her heart in gratitude. She must see him; for no sooner is a soul conscious of

deliverance, than it seeks to know him by whom that deliverance has been achieved; and hearing that he is in the Pharisee's house, partaking of a collation, she at once enters there. Her errand is apparent to all from the alabaster box in her hand. She is going to anoint the head of some one at the board; a custom to which the Psalmist alludes in those words—"Thou preparest a table before me, thou anointest my head with oil." But no sooner does she approach the Saviour, as he reclines at the meal, than her feelings entirely overpower her. As she bends over his feet, her tears fall on them like rain; indeed the original is, she began to rain tears upon his feet. Then she wipes them with the hairs of her head. Scarcely, however, are they dried, before they are again bathed in the rivers which run from her streaming eyes. And thus she continues washing his feet, wiping them, kissing them as if her lips would cling there forever, ("she hath not ceased to kiss my feet,") and anointing them with fragrant ointment.

But it is not enough that we are touched by the pathos of this scene; we must analyze this woman's conduct, and learn from it what are the marks of true evangelical repentance.

It may, perhaps, surprise you that not a word is said of her legal distress, of the pain and horror into which she is plunged on account of her crimes. For—although nothing requires us to infer, as the scoff of the Pharisee would insinuate, that she was notorious through the city as the shame and reproach of her sex—yet at least modesty, chastity, virtue were gone. How is it, then, that she is not clothed in sackcloth and terrified by the clamors of an upbraiding conscience? How is it that we see in her only tenderness and love?

The answer to this question is to be found in the nature of true, evangelical penitence. In a state of unpardoned sin there will be conviction and anguish when the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of a sinner to see himself as he appears at the bar of divine justice; there will be "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." But the repentance of the Gospel dissipates these fears, and sheds peace into the soul by reconciling us to

the justice of God and to our own consciences. Judas hangs himself; it is remorse without repentance. Peter goes out and weeps bitterly, but hastens to Jesus; it is remorse leading to repentance. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance not to be repented of;" that is to say, it is the source of consolation and joy. And in this woman we see all the traits of such repentance.

Observe her *faith*. An outcast from society; without a single friend upon earth; having no home to which she can fly and hide herself; brothers, sisters, father, even mother abhorring her as the disgrace of the family; he who had betrayed her confiding innocence forsaking her to the contempt of the world, and, what is far worse, to that self-contempt which must sink man or woman lower and lower;—in spite of all this, she comes to Jesus without a doubt or fear. Whoever despises her, he will not, he does not. Whoever may cast her off, he has welcomed her. Poor child of frailty and error, she has found not only a human heart to pity her, but a divine Redeemer who has rescued her from her guilt and pollution, has given her "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

See, next, her *contrition*. Though forgiven by God, she cannot forgive herself. The free sovereign grace and mercy so exceeding abundant in her pardon humble her in the very dust. In her experience is fulfilled the language of the Lord by his prophet Ezekiel, "That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." Harsh as is the judgment of the Pharisee who, because she had fallen, still charges her with crimes which she now loathes and detests, there is in her breast a judge far more severe and inexorable. In a similar case Jesus stooped down and wrote a ruined woman's sentence in the sand. Her soul is prostrate in the dust, but she has written her condemnation in the depths of her being. Awakened from her delirious dream she is covered with confusion. She cannot raise her eyes from the ground. She does not utter a single word. Sighs, tears, lamentations are her only language. We have seen

that ointment was for the heads of those who feasted; she pours it upon the Saviour's feet.

While thus self-abased, however, behold in her another element always found in true penitence. I mean her *courage.* The derision of her former accomplices; the contemptuous sneers of all who are acquainted with her frailty—and when her virtue has been surrendered a woman feels as if the whole world knows her dishonor;—before yielding to temptation she persuades herself that her secret will be safe, but no sooner is the deed done than, besides that glance which pierces all disguises, every eye she meets seems to be exploring her guilt, reading it in her face, detecting it in her looks; above all, the repulsive horror of the virtuous and upright who shun her presence as defiling the very atmosphere;—all this she must encounter; but there is that within her soul which can brave all this. Her passions had defied the opinion of men; shall her piety be afraid of it? What had she found in a wretched world that its frown should keep her from her Redeemer? What will *they* say? —that "*they*" is terrible to most people, but it is nothing to her. What will *he* say, what has *he* said?—this is everything. Let them curse, but bless thou!—She had gloried in her shame; she will not now be ashamed of her glory.

And this suggests the only other trait I notice in our penitent; it is her *love.* Jesus ascribes her conduct entirely to love. Jesus sees in her nothing but love. This, my brethren, is the power of the Gospel, that it breathes a new affection into the soul, an affection which changes the entire character. This is "what the law could not do," what no fears, threats, punishments can do; but what is done by the mission of the Son of God into the world. Everything in this woman's conduct shows the love glowing in her heart. During all this scene not a syllable escapes her. Mutely she enters the hall, mutely she passes to the Savour's couch, and there reverently bows herself; but how eloquent is her silence. We feel instinctively how much has been forgiven, and how much she loves.

Love so tender. Jesus does not seem even to notice

her, but she asks no notice; it is enough that she can be near him; can kneel and caress his feet, and wash them with her tears, and wipe them and kiss them and anoint them. Love so active. Real affection deals not in professions but in deeds; and she does what she can; she omits nothing that can express her gratitude and devotion. Love which hastens to make reparation for the past by devoting to Jesus the gifts she had so deplorably abused. Those eyes which had burned with unhallowed fires, are now blinded with weeping. Those tresses which had been her pride, which had allured to voluptuousness hearts formed to serve God, now fall dishevelled over her blushing face and minister to the menial office she delights to perform for her deliverer. Her hair the Apostle declares is the glory of the woman; and she thus expresses the inward adoration which lays at the feet of the Son of God that which constitutes the highest honor, beauty, glory of her humanity. The perfumes which once gratified her vanity are now consecrated to him whose name is sweeter than myrrh, aloes, and cassia. And her lips, so often profaned by unholy passions, are now pressed again and again to the sacred feet which had brought her the news of salvation. Lastly, love which satisfies all the boundless capacities of her heart. How wretched the pleasures of sin when compared with the happiness which now fills her soul. Criminal love had been the cause of her errors and sorrows; holy love is now the source of a thousand heavenly consolations. What a change indeed has she experienced. What a change from men who had sought only their own selfish gratification, to him who has come to die for her, and who has thus signally distinguished her by his grace; from objects she had always been forced to feel were unworthy of her affections, to him who is "the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely;" from Ammons who had slighted and despised her for the very sacrifices she conceded, to him who does not overlook, who overvalues the slightest tokens of her preference; from those whose love was so inconstant and perfidious, to him whose love, like himself, is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; in a word, from the tyranny of a delirious lust, from the cruel agitations of an upbraiding conscience, from the mortifying

precautions, subterfuges, jealousies, alarms, torments of guilt, from the dismal weight hanging upon her heart, the self-reproaches, the self-loathing revulsions of those moments when the soul had leisure to inspect itself—from all this to the solid peace, the blessedness, the sweet confidence of pardon and communion with heaven. I spoke just now of what this woman had immolated as a proof of her love. I was mistaken. It is her chains, her afflictions, her miseries which she casts at the feet of her adorable Redeemer.

Behold, my brethren, the love, the penitence of this sinner;—a spectacle worthy of God himself. She is an object now dearer to the heart of God than she had been in the pomp of her unsullied womanhood, a sight which kindles unspeakable joy among the angels in glory. But with what emotions does the Pharisee view this scene? Let us now turn to him, for in him we have the second lesson taught by the history before us. In him, as in its type, we see the temper with which a censorious world regards those whom the grace of God has mercifully drawn from the vortex of its temptations and crimes.

II. As we read the narrative we feel that the conduct of this woman—her grief, tears, gratitude, love—must have touched for a moment even the heart of Simon. However that might have been, he perceives that his guest not only receives but encourages these marks of homage. He is, therefore, silent. He waits to see what Jesus will say to her. Perhaps—his pride quelling the better thought rising in his breast—he hopes to discover some fresh grounds for the charge which had been brought against him by the Pharisees who said, "He is the friend of publicans and sinners." (v. 34.)

I have already remarked that up to this time Jesus had not seemed to notice the penitent at his feet, but he has been closely scrutinizing another person in that apartment. He has penetrated Simon's bosom, and detected there sentiments in every view hateful to God, yet constantly harbored by those of whom Simon is a faithful representative. "Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and

what manner of woman this is that toucheth him," for she is a sinner."

Such are the thoughts with which he secretly hardens his heart against an object deserving his compassion and sympathy,—so unfeeling, so harsh, so wanton. But it is only the temper of the world;—a world which never forgets, which takes pleasure in recalling and exaggerating the former sins of those who are converted to Jesus; a world all whose maxims, fashions, examples tend to corrupt the heart, but which makes no allowance for that corruption; a world which prepares, admires, applauds theatres, balls, exhibitions that captivate the senses, intoxicate the passions, inflame the imagination, yet pretends that its purity is outraged if the natural consequences follow, and covers with infamy those whom it has itself seduced and ruined.

Then, too, the Pharisee's utter ignorance of the Saviour and of himself. "This man if he were a prophet." I do not stop to enquire why Simon believed that a prophet was a discerner of spirits, and to show you that it was, at that day, the general opinion that a true prophet could read characters, was always endowed with a moral clairvoyance. The Pharisee's remark may even have referred to The Prophet—the Messiah, one of whose attributes Isaiah had predicted would be the power of penetrating the secrets of the human bosom. Hence, when Jesus convinced Nathaniel of his acquaintance with his thoughts, he at once exclaimed, "Thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel." Hence the appeal of the woman of Samaria, "Come see a man who told me all things which ever I did. Is not this the Christ?" And hence the earnestness with which the Evangelist reminds us that Jesus "needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man." But I am digressing.—The point to which I am speaking is Simon's ignorance. For is a prophet to refuse all intercourse with sinners? Where did he learn this theology? In what school did he acquire such ideas of that God who invites the vilest to return to him, who says, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool?" Ah, Simon, it is

because he is not only a prophet, but more than a prophet, that this poor child of sin and misery is welcome to him. "This man if he were a prophet would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner." All her contrition, her tenderness, the profusion of love, gratitude, tears, he describes by the cold phrase "touches him;" and he shrinks from the very thought of such a contact, "for she is a sinner." But, Simon, what art thou in the sight of God? Magnify as thou mayest the guilt of this woman, nothing in her life has been more odious and abominable in his eyes than is this supercilious self-conceit, this arrogance which despises others. Nor only self-conceit and arrogance, what hypocrisy. For, after all, in his eyes with whom an impure look is adultery in the heart, how little real difference is there between the holiest and the most erring. We are loud, unsparing against one who has yielded to temptation; yet how often are we conscious of thoughts and feelings which would have been carried out into the vilest acts, if one mightier than ourselves had not "withheld us from sinning," Thou superb Pharisee, flown with vanity, puffed up with admiration of thine own righteousness, if thou knewest the gift of God and who it is that hath condescended to come under thy roof, and what is thine own character at the tribunal of divine justice, and what is the gush of gratitude springing up in the bosom of this penitent now when her soul has been absolved and life and light are in her heart, instead of thus pointing disdainfully at her, thou wouldst have fallen at the feet of this compassionate Redeemer, imploring the mercy she has obtained, and without which thou must one day "awake to shame and everlasting contempt."

In short, there is something still more criminal in the judgment of this Pharisee. It is cruel and barbarous. All her penitence,—tears so abundant, contrition so sincere, confusion so overwhelming, humiliation so profound, homage so mute because it can find no language in which to express its gratitude and adoration,—all this he thinks Jesus ought to spurn with contempt. Fallen low, he would have the Saviour join with the world in sinking her to still deeper degradation. The respect of others,

and what is far more deplorable, her own self-respect lost he desires that the Redeemer may crush out in her every vestige of hope, and plunge her into despair. Above all, this woman is now a trophy and model of triumphant grace, but of grace in a soul which still feels the bruises of sin, and rejoices with trembling; and Simon wishes the friend of sinners to "break the bruised reed and to quench the smoking flax," to repel the devotion he himself has inspired, to trample under foot a heart sprinkled with his blood, glowing with his love, and to cast back into the eternal abysses a brand he has just plucked from the burning.

III. We cannot penetrate the sentiments which the Pharisee secretly revolves in his bosom without exclaiming, with David, "Let me fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great, but let me not fall into the hands of man." And this petition we would utter with still greater emphasis, if I had time to go on, as I intended, and to dwell upon the treatment which both the woman and Simon receive at the hands of Jesus.

There are among men two very different estimates of sin; each false and fatal. In reference to their own conduct they make light of sin. Human nature is frail; their hearts are good; and if they are betrayed into certain aberrations, after all, their intentions were right and ought to atone for such indiscretions. Now this view of sin may seem very well before the world, and might be sufficient if an apology were all we want; but this is not what an enlightened conscience seeks; it must have pardon and peace which can never be reached through these palliations.

When men sit upon the sins of others, all this is reversed; they resemble the Pharisee, they are stern and inexorable censors. Forgetting that universal brotherhood of weakness and temptation by which they and all the children of Adam are linked together, they erect a standard suited only to unfallen beings. It is because the Gospel is an economy of mercy that there is hope for any man; but they seem to think that they do God homage by expunging the most lovely of his attributes,

by asserting only the severe aspects and awful penalties of his law, by leaving nothing but condemnation and despair for those who shed the bitterest tears over the disorders of their lives.

What is the view which Jesus takes of sin? Study the parable by which he silences Simon and comforts this woman. In his estimate sin is no trifle. It is a debt which binds us hand and foot under the dreadful curse of the law. Does he then regard it as involving us in irretrievable perdition? Certainly if left to ourselves. But, blessed be God, hosannas to that love which hath interposed and wrought out an amazing salvation for the guiltiest,—we are not left to ourselves. "When they had nothing to pay, he freely forgave them both." This is the way in which he deals with sin. This is the Gospel of the grace of God; and it is with this he exposes the self-righteous Pharisee, and assures the penitent kneeling at his feet.

The former he leads unconsciously to confess that where sin is forgiven love will spring up in the heart,—love in proportion to the guilt cancelled. He then contrasts the warm, gushing gratitude of this woman with the cold, heartless hospitality which had been extended to him. "I entered into thy house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment." Enter, my brethren, into this rebuke. How must the soul of this conceited Pharisee have shrunk abashed, as he felt those piercing eyes searching the labyrinths of his hypocrisy, exposing thoughts which he believed were hidden in his own bosom, and convicting him by his own confession, of being still unpardoned, because utterly destitute of that love without which all his exterior sanctity was only an abomination in the sight of God.

Having thus rebuked the Pharisee, Jesus now turns to the woman. Hitherto he has seemed to pay no attention to her. She goes on weeping, washing his feet,

wiping and kissing them; but his face is turned from her, and he acts as if he had not observed her. Now her time has come; and with what affection, with what tenderness, with what generous devotion does he vindicate and commend her, and make her cause his own. Simon can discover nothing but her sin; Jesus sees nothing but her penitence and love. The Pharisee secretly despises and denounces her; Jesus openly defends her, and shews that, while the self-righteousness of her accuser renders him odious before heaven, her very crimes have wrought in her that contrition and piety which are acceptable to God. Lastly, instead of scorning, he encourages, applauds, assures her. She had forfeited the esteem of the world; he raises her to know that she is honorable in the esteem of the Lord of heaven and earth. Far more deplorable and fatal was her loss of self-respect, her utter degradation in her own eyes; he breathes into her a new life, and the hope and confidence which are inspired by the consciousness of that life. Her principles, her character all ruined; there were voices which she had heard at times among these ruins, as if angels were pleading with her to rise up and break the shackles under which she groaned and terminate her misery with her sins. Underneath all her guilt and shame, she had never ceased to feel that in her being there was the mysterious germ of something better, after which she often cried and struggled, but cried and struggled in vain. Jesus gives efficacy to these heavenly calls, he touches that germ and causes it to bloom and expand. His Spirit arms her with strength, crowns her trembling resolutions with victory, makes her a new creature—inhaling a new atmosphere—rejoicing in new thoughts, emotions, affections, prospects—living in a new world.

Behold what Jesus does for this sinner; and in her behold what he does for every one who comes thus in faith and penitence to his feet. He said to the woman "Thy sins are forgiven." He said more. I have on a former occasion, made some remarks upon a question once agitated, whether the love of this woman was the cause or the effect of her forgiveness; and we then saw that it

was clearly the effect. Jesus confirms this view by his final words. He said to the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace." Not her love, but her *faith* had brought pardon and peace into her soul. He tells her too, that it is by this grace she is to persevere in a life of holiness. "Go in peace." Go on believing; and as faith hath delivered thee from the guilt, it will conquer in thee all the power and corruption of sin. To us this is the Gospel conveyed to all by this narrative. This is the Gospel found on every page of this volume. Far be it from me to depreciate morality. Of one virtue we are assured that "it is in the sight of God of great price." Here as elsewhere sin is represented as a debt, not only to warn us that the longer it remains the more it accumulates, but that we may regard our good works as to their mercantile value, and may feel that they have no such value in the jurisprudence of heaven, that they are not legal tenders to make satisfaction for sins against God and to purchase anything of him. Until we feel ourselves utterly undone we may render to Jesus some respect which costs no humiliation, just as Simon invited him to supper. It is when we see our guilt, our ruin, and how through the great atonement all is freely forgiven, that we resemble this sinner in her humility, her gratitude, her love, her devotion. Men may frame a thousand objections and cavils, but the simple fact is, that God's method of reaching, melting, converting the soul is the free offer of pardon and salvation through the sacrifice of Calvary. I know the terrors of the Lord have their work to do, but it is only to prepare the way that we may "persuade men." Fear is to make a breach through which love may enter. Our message is mercy, not wrath; heaven, not hell. Could the accusations of Simon, could the threats of all the Pharisees in Nain have reformed this woman? And just as ineffectual now are the severities of the law. To humble, subdue, change the heart—this is "what the law could not do," but what is done by that proclamation of free mercy and forgiveness, through the blood of Christ, which substitutes repentance unto life" for the remorse, the sorrow of the world that worketh death," which relieves the conscience of its load of guilt, discharges the

heart of every debt except that of gratitude, and causes our memory to recall our sins only with the sweet assurance that they are blotted out forever.

And there is something else the law could not do.—Even after we have received remission of our past sins through the atonement, the law has no power to uphold and carry us forward in a life of holiness and peace.—It is the Gospel which produces in our characters and lives a change, not dependent on feeling, and therefore transient, but fixed and permanent. It is the Gospel, which, not only "magnifies the law and makes it honorable," but makes it delightful by casting over it all the charms which ravish our souls and bind them to the Redeemer. And it is the Gospel, the assurance of almighty, everlasting grace and strength which cheers and sustains us, inspiring confidence, securing victory in all our conflicts.

My beloved brethren, what a Saviour is ours; what a great, glorious salvation; let us understand it; let us open our hearts to all its blessed motives and influences. "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." This does not mean that any need the pardon only of a few sins. Jesus does not refer to the amount of sin, for then it might be said, let us "continue in sin that grace may abound;" he refers to our sense of guilt and our estimate of what has been forgiven. Just as we believe there is any merit in ourselves, we, of course, deduct from the mercy which hath blotted out our sins, and from our gratitude for deliverance. It is when our eyes are opened to see all our guilt, our depravity, and the free, sovereign, distinguishing grace which hath raised us from such an abyss to glory, honor and immortality—it is then that love absorbs all our souls; that we cry out, Lord, what wilt thou have us to do? and would weep if not permitted to do something as an expression of the ardors burning in our souls; that, with the first christians, we exclaim, "The love of Christ constrains us;" that, with this woman, we instinctively consecrate to Jesus all in which we once gloried,—knowing on earth no dignity, no privilege to compare with that of confessing and serving such

a Redeemer,—anticipating in heaven no higher honor, no sublimer happiness than to cast our crowns at his feet, and mingle with the multitude who forever ascribe all power, majesty and glory to Him that redeemed them and washed them from their sins in his own precious blood. To him be praise and dominion forever. AMEN.

Sermon Eighth.

THE LAMB OF GOD.

"Again the next day after, John stood and two of his disciples, and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God."—JOHN 1: 35-36.

HE who would commune with the soul of the prince of apostles and preachers must study his epistles. In the recital of his travels and labors we have only his external life sketched by another. In his letters, which even his enemies admitted to be "weighty and powerful," we have a revelation of his inner life coming from himself. And in these autobiographical disclosures we find that the secret of his holiness, his deadness to the world, his pre-eminent power as an evangelist was his knowledge of a crucified Saviour.

It was after a full experiment of the power of the cross that he said, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." In the polished city of Athens, he saw all around him a beautiful superstition; and he made the attempt, which has since been more than once made, to engraft the Gospel upon the popular religious sentiment. He failed. Scarcely any effect was produced by his sermons. Thus admonished, he visited Corinth; and then, renouncing all philosophical argument and accommodation, he preached Christ, and a flourishing church was soon established.

The same object which thus monopolized the mind and heart of this accomplished scholar and orator had, in the twilight of the Gospel, absorbed the soul of the austere herald of the wilderness. The first genius in the academy of Gamaliel rejoiced in the refinements and elegancies of literature, but John's was the spirit and mood of Elijah. Stern, abstemious, spurning ease and effeminacy

he loved the congenial rudeness and solitude of the desert; and not the common people only, but Herod himself soon felt that he had as little taste for soft speech as for soft raiment.

I wish I had time to speak of the character of this remarkable man. What greatness and yet what humility. "Verily I say unto you among them that are born of woman there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist;" in all that august catalogue of patriarchs, prophets, priests, kings, there had been none nobler than he; but he counted himself unworthy to unloose the shoelatchet of the Redeemer. What popularity, and yet what desire to hide himself behind the glory of his Master. "He was a burning and shining light, and there went out unto him all Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan;" the scribes and Pharisees, and even the haughty monarch, listened eagerly to his stirring eloquence; but he styled himself a mere voice—*vox et præterea nihil*; and exulted in the thought that he would decrease, while the Messiah would increase.

I may not, however, dwell upon the life and ministry of one whose career was as brief as it was brilliant. It is his theme which demands our attention to-day. "The law and the prophets were until John, since that time the kingdom of God is preached." John, then inaugurated prophetically the Gospel dispensation, and you see what was his theology. Under direct inspiration he points his own disciples away from himself to the Lamb of God as the only hope for man. "Behold the Lamb of God!" this was the all engrossing topic of the Baptist; this is the all engrossing topic for us; this is the abridgement of all sermons, the epitome of all doctrines, the substance of all exhortations, the whole body of evangelical divinity. Nor, this morning, have I any arguments or counsels or entreaties or warnings or expostulations or consolations to address to you, which are not all comprehended in this short, but emphatic, energetical exclamation, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

I. Entering at once into the matter, I begin by regarding the text as a call to contemplate the earthly life of the

adorable Being upon whose form John's gaze was riveted. And passing other aspects, I wish you to study his character as a demonstration of the truth of his doctrines. Upon this subject age after age has transmitted to us an ever accumulating legacy of evidence, but this I do not now touch. No testimonies appeal more directly to the reason, and are more calculated to produce conviction, than those derived from the character and conduct of the Saviour. And this sort of proof is the more worthy of your attention, because it is generally overlooked by the advocates of Christianity.

Of course he only is a Christian, who embraces the religion of Jesus because he believes it to be true. A Christian loves truth first, and receives the Gospel because it is truth from God. To love the Bible more than truth, or to adopt its teachings through the prejudice of education or because we hope for some benefit, all this, you at once see, is not the faith of the Christian, in such a blind and selfish assent, there is nothing which can secure the approbation of conscience or of God. A Christian embraces the doctrines of revelation because they are true. He knows when and where his religion began. And he knows its author. Indeed Jesus was himself the embodiment of his religion, he cannot be separated from it, as other teachers may be from their systems. And, now, what I say is, that the more you contemplate this extraordinary Being—the more closely you "*behold him as he walked*" and lived upon the earth, the more irresistible will be the conclusion that he communicated truth to mankind. Prophecies, miracles,—very well, I appreciate the force of the arguments which they furnish; but in the character of Christ—so entirely transcending the attributes of our fallen humanity—there is an accession of evidence which establishes a certainty and defies cavil or evasion.

Any historical name calls up certain biographical associations, and from infancy we have been accustomed to hear of Jesus. This familiarity causes us to regard as commonplace the most astonishing phenomenon which has ever appeared among men. And, moreover, pardon me for saying that few ever bring to the study of this

character those lights and reflections which are indispensable, if we would feel its celestial purity and glory. If you would comprehend something of the Saviour's character, you must consider its perfect originality. Once, and only once, has there appeared upon this earth such an impersonation. The minds of philosophers are every day more and more perplexed by that question of Pilate, "What shall I do then with Jesus?" We have had "Ecce Homo," and "Ecce Deus," and "Ecce Deus Homo," and I know not how many other treatises; but high above them all, amidst the lapse of centuries and the waste of worlds, the Christ of the Bible stands alone, by himself, a solitary, unapproachable, paragon of purity and love, an original revelation of divine perfection. It is, indeed, this very perfection which renders the character of Jesus less striking to common readers. Not only are there no defects to act as foils, no shades to contrast with the lights, but there are no salient virtues, no one trait of excellence having pre-eminence over other traits. His life is given by four very different writers, each simply recording "what Jesus both said and did until the day that he was taken up," and the whole brings out an entirely new manifestation. Never did a history bear upon its face such marks of truth; and so unlabored and artless are all the narratives, that we are more intimately acquainted with the biography of Jesus than with that of any remarkable personage. The evangelists do not present him only on set occasions, they bring him before us in every position. In language unadorned, chastened by veneration into the severest simplicity, they recount his public deeds and sayings. With the same calm consciousness of his greatness, with a love which rises into reverence, and a reverence which melts back into love, they introduce us to his most confidential interchange of thoughts with his disciples. They pronounce no eulogies, utter no exclamations; at all times and everywhere they seek only to place him before us as he was. And at all times and everywhere, we feel instinctively that in him humanity existed under conditions entirely distinct from those of our fallen nature; that only one such being ever appeared upon earth; that he lived a life of perfection and communion with

the Eternal Father impossible to the constitution of a mere creature; that he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;" that—while the purest of the children of Adam have ever been imperfect and "from beneath," he was "from above," the incarnation of celestial truth, sanctity, benignity.

I need not say that the sacred writers describe a character of which they could have previously formed no conception. Nor was the perfection of Jesus a combination of traits which had existed separately in others. His virtues were heavenly; never had one of them been exemplified in a single pattern. The portraits we have of this wonderful personage are plainly drawn by those who had but one single object—to "set forth in order a declaration of those things" they knew of their Master.—And the Being who thus becomes the subject of our contemplation is, in his personal character, in his ministry, in his life, in his death, as immeasurably above humanity as the heavens are above the earth. Not only could he demand of his enemies, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" but he is himself plainly conscious of immaculate holiness. Mingling among men as a man, entering with the tenderest sympathy into their miseries, relieving their wants, healing their diseases, assuaging their griefs, weeping at their afflictions;—we yet behold in him a visitant from another world, one who is not from men nor of men. A sunbeam penetrating sinks of pollution is not more unstained and insulated, not more plainly "from above," than he was in all his intercourse with human passions and corruptions. And whether we consider the judicial authority with which he condemned sin, or the tenderness of his sympathy for human sorrow and suffering, or the unaffected majesty with which he asserts his eternal power and glory, or his life, or his preparation for death, or his death,—we will at once confess, that a new unique Being has appeared on the platform of human affairs; that he is invested with unrivalled peerless dignity; and that his words are truth, his doctrines the wisdom which is to enlighten and elevate and save mankind.

If you would comprehend something of the Saviour's

character, you must remember the age in which he appeared. "When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman." It is true that the season of his manifestation was the fittest; for the world was then in a state of great scientific and literary advancement;—so that men's minds were ready to investigate the claims and teachings of Him who now became an actor in its history. But the period was one of deep and universal moral degeneracy. I will not disgust you with the proofs of this assertion. It is a matter of easy demonstration, that every form of vice rioted in the world, every form of hypocrisy and corruption reigned in the religion both of Jew and Gentile. At such a time, this adorable Being stood before men.—Was he only a man? only the carpenter's son?—Suppose that up to this hour our earth had been shrouded in thick darkness, with only here and there a dim star in all that night. And suppose that, all at once, the East should be mantled with rosy light; and then we should see a limb of the orb of day; and then, trailing streams of glory, the dazzling luminary should ride sublimely up to the zenith in all his unchastened splendor; would he not be an idiot who could believe that human hands had kindled the radiant disc, and that human skill was guiding it on its imperial pathway? To a reflecting mind, this miracle would not be so amazing, it would not so clearly attest the interposition of divine wisdom and power, as the revelation, at such an epoch, of that life and character which we admire in Jesus.

A third view of the subject before us has reference to the pecular people among whom Jesus was born, "of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came." Never were prejudices more lodged and rooted than those of the Jews. As God's chosen people they walled themselves off from the rest of mankind, despising others as outcasts from Jehovah's favor, refusing to eat or to have any sort of communion with them. For themselves they arrogated the exclusive protection of heaven; they were sure of salvation; and gloried in the magnificence of their temple, the gorgeous splendor of their priesthood, and the imposing pomp of their rituals. True, the Romans had been

mysteriously permitted to subjugate them; but this was only for a while. The hour of deliverance, the day of vengeance and recompenses, was now at hand. Jehovah had not forgotten Zion. Shiloh was about to come and break the hated yoke, and smite in pieces the might of their haughty foe. "Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan," but a more signal triumph would soon be achieved, when Salem should be crowned with the diadem of the whole earth, and the once invincible prowess of the Cæsars cower humbly at the feet of the illustrious conqueror.

While these expectations are standing on tiptoe, Jesus appears, and very soon all eyes are turned to him. The people hail him as the long expected Messiah, and are eager to crown him. Nor does he, like John, repel their homage; he claims it. He is the glorious monarch who had been the theme of prophecy. But, from first to last, he rises superior to the feelings of his nation, he looks down with pity upon their earthly ambition. He declares that the kingdom of heaven is at hand; but that it is a kingdom not of this world, its sceptre to be won not by arms but by truth; a spiritual empire, the reign of peace and holiness and love; a throne to be established not in Jerusalem, but in the heart of a renovated world. Crowding about this mysterious Being, the multitudes hold their breath, that they may catch the first word of command which shall marshal them in battle array and lead them to victory. But, instead of appealing to the popular enthusiasm, he speaks to them of repentance, of peace, of humility, of the blessedness of persecution.

Represent to yourselves the disappointment, the chagrin of the feverish throng eagerly pressing around him, burning with patriotic ardor and revenge, when, in his very first address, he thus announces the privileges and distinctions of his subjects: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven;" "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth;" "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;" "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for

my sake." And in all his life we find the same sustained elevation above the hereditary hopes, the ancient religious faith of his nation; above the influences of birth, education, society. In his entire ministry he reveals the sublime and perfectly original conception of a kingdom of God which is in the soul. And he constantly proclaims that his mission is spiritual, that he had come to deliver man from sin, and conduct him to glory, honor and immortality beyond the skies.

My brethren, enter into these truths. And to these reflections I ought to add others. I ought to point to the wonderful changes which have been wrought in the moral condition of the world by the brief residence of this heavenly visitant amongst men. Since he entered humanity, a new power has been at work; a new force, acquiring fresh momentum every year, has been moulding human affairs. Since the wonderful birth at Bethlehem, the world has been a new world. I ought to remind you that this day three continents confess the sovereignty, and every portion of the earth is feeling the influence of him who, "being the holiest among the mighty, and the mightiest among the holy, has, with his pierced hand, lifted empires off their hinges, has turned the stream of centuries out of its channel, and still governs the ages." And I ought to collect at least some of those traits which were united in his character; traits to which we still look up and feel their incomparable exaltation above our nature; traits which did not mature slowly and mutinously like human virtues, but shone out at once in God-like perfection; and traits which render the manifestation of such a character at that period, and among that nation, a moral wonder far more striking than any physical miracle.

These and other thoughts I ought to urge, but I will not. I have said enough. "Behold the Lamb of God;" contemplate this extraordinary Being, and you will confess that his religion must be true. Again I lament the influence of familiarity in deadening the impression which such a character ought to make upon us. But, after all, "Behold the Lamb of God;" study his life, his character, and you will pity the childish cavils of infidel-

ity. Why, the conception of such excellence, such purity, grandeur, love, never dawned upon the mind of sage or seer. An infidel says that "the inventor of such a biography would have been not less wonderful than its Subject."* And when I know that this full-orbed, heaven-born perfection really existed among men; existed did I say?—when I see him still existing; when I feel him still living, moving, acting, speaking all around me and within me; when—though the outer conditions of his life have passed away for eighteen hundred years—I behold him still present, breathing life and love into millions who would die for him, inspiring his churches with courage and strength as if the shout of a king were among them, vanquishing his foes, consoling, sustaining his people, slowly but surely regenerating the world;—when I see, when I feel all this, I ask, I want no more, I can have not a doubt; I say, with the centurion, "Truly this was the Son of God;" I exclaim, with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." As I read the history of Jesus, I exult in a confidence I cannot express; I need no other testimony; I no longer examine prophecies or miracles; the truth carries conviction to my mind instantly and irresistibly by its own self-evidence. Look at the sun; it shines by its own radiance, it needs no foreign light. And thus it is with the character of the Lamb of God; the more I explore it, the more transparent is its divine glory; and the more clearly, of course, do I see truth stamped upon Christianity; for the character of Jesus is not only the proof of the religion he taught, it is that religion itself.

II. I pass now to a second view of our text,—a second import of the exclamation, "Behold the Lamb of God;" regarding it as having reference to the Redeemer's work,

* I refer, of course, to the well-known language of "*Emile*" by Rosseau, "et l-Evangile a des caracteres de verite si grands, si frappants, si parfaitement inimitables, que l-inventeur en serait plus etonnant que le heros."

to the great atonement which he wrought out for man.

That this stupendous transaction—however dimly foreshadowed or rather fore-shined as yet—was prophetically revealed to John, we can have no doubt. The very phraseology of the passage shows this. "Lamb," "Lamb of God,"—"Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world,"—these terms admit of only one interpretation; they allude evidently to the Paschal lamb, and prove that the Spirit of Christ which was in John disclosed to him, in this Being, the great antitype.

Jesus has now returned to the Jordan, after his baptism and the temptation of the wilderness. Though awed by his dignity, John did not know him when he administered the sacred rite (v. 33); but now the mysterious victim is prophetically disclosed to his faith. As the Redeemer walks in sublime silence, equipped for his majestic and awful achievement, it is the office of the forerunner to announce him. This John had done the day before, proclaiming him to the multitude. Now he repeats his testimony more pointedly to some of his own disciples, who at once follow Jesus. The Lamb of God as the great sacrifice for sin, this is the object towards whom the herald seeks to direct the attention of all. And now, my brethren, in all the past, the present, the future, on earth, in heaven, in time, in eternity—what ever has been, or ever can be so novel, so wonderful, so profoundly, absorbingly interesting as this? Before the sublimity of the Saviour's enterprise, the exploits of kings and heroes sink into contempt. We cannot reflect upon its intrinsic grandeur, its bearings upon this fallen world, its relations to other portions of the moral universe, without feeling our souls alternately exalted and humbled, subdued by awe, melted into tenderness, and swept by wondering, adoring hosannas.

I have said that the title "Lamb" refers to a sacrifice. The first great truth here unfolded, then, is that the death of Jesus was a real sacrifice, a propitiation for sin;—a doctrine this, most repulsive to those who deny the Saviour's divinity, but which is one of the clearest matters of revelation; a doctrine which is the very revelation itself given in the Gospel; and which is the pre-

cise point of separation between those who preach the Gospel, and those who "preach another Gospel" which is no Gospel, but a fraud and a sham.

Men and brethren hear me on this topic. All things from the planets overhead to the dust beneath your feet, are under law. Man's true liberty, like that of angels, is not to be free from law, but to be under the best law. The child is born and grows up into the citizen, carrying within him the sense of responsibility to government as his normal condition; and no two ideas are more indissolubly connected in our minds than punishment and the violation of law.

Now, God, in his moral administration, governs this earth by laws written in the Bible, or in our own consciences. All men bear in their own bosoms the conviction that the laws of God are good, they are compelled to confess their absolute perfection; and they are also conscious that they have violated these laws. Penalty is, of course, a part of law; without it the most solemn enactments would be only advice and exhortation. If law be violated, the penalty must be enforced, except where there is some extenuation of guilt; for better no laws, than laws which are not executed. Such are the majesty and inviolability of the divine law, that a single transgression instantly changes altogether the state and destiny of the creature; involving a fatal and irrevocable ruin—as we see in the history of reprobate angels. And if one sin work such desperate conclusions, what is the state of man whose iniquities are as the sands of the sea? Lastly it follows, of course, that there can be no escape for a single human being, unless the divine law be repealed—(which is impossible, for that law is a transcript of God's character, and its revocation would quite expunge his perfections)—or else some medium be found by which God can be just and yet justify the ungodly.

These propositions could be easily established, but it is unnecessary; they are really so many axioms. And these maxims conceded, the only question is, by what interposition can man be rescued from the seemingly irremediable consequences of sin? There must be some *medium*; and as repentance is the only medium which—

without the Gospel—a reflecting mind could suggest, let us, for a moment, examine this ground of hope.

Now, to my judgment, it is enough to expose this system, that I find it contradicted everywhere in the economy of nature. The physical laws of this planet are from the same author who has framed the moral code, and as to them what is the fact? Does penitence retrieve the mischief of a violated law? In the natural world we find a vast disproportion between our ability to inflict harm and to repair it. If a man throw himself from the top of a lofty column, will repentance cure his wounds and knit together his fractured limbs? If he swallow arsenic, will repentance arrest the deadly distillment? Now, surely, God's moral administration must be at least as inviolable as his physical government. Why, then, should we expect that repentance can absolve us from a thousand infractions of the moral law?

From nature, let us appeal to reason; what is its verdict? Sorrow for sin and reformation are duties which reason and conscience enforce; but can the discharge of a present duty atone for a past sin? Why, it were not more irrational to suppose that the performance of past duty would justify present transgression.

In short, civil government is the ordinance of God; but where is the government which remits the punishment due to crime, because the culprit repents? Add, too, that in the dispensation of the Gospel, the only alternative is hell or heaven. If, then, repentance can save, it secures not only forgiveness but everlasting glory. What would be thought of human laws which should provide, not only pardon, but the highest honors for all penitent criminals? With such legislation no administration could escape hopeless demoralization.

As I thus state these truths, you at once admit them; you see that neither natural religion nor philosophy can aid us in discovering the medium by which guilty man can be rescued; that God must devise and disclose the remedy. Well, well, you say, but we have a revelation, and is not pardon there promised immediately? With those who receive the Bible as a communication from heaven—this is really the only question; and the answer

is unequivocal and conclusive. For my part, every operation of the Supreme Ruler which I see around me forbids my expecting from him a direct amnesty. Nature is full of a mediatorial scheme. In the animal and physical world, in illuminating and fertilizing the earth, in sustaining and perpetuating human life, in the entire material economy, God always accomplishes his purposes and confers blessings mediately—by the employment of agencies;—why should I expect a deviation from this settled plan in his spiritual dispensations?

In the next place, there is as to sin and the pardon of sin, a revelation older than the Sacred Books. It is written in the human bosom, and what does this proclaim? Its mysterious yet explicit admonition is, not only that there must be some medium, but that the medium must be sacrificial. Wherever men are found they seek to expiate for sin, not only by mediation, but by multiplying the number of mediators, by numerous priests and repeated offerings;—thus confessing their guilt, the felt necessity of some medium, and the imperfection of their schemes. Reason can detect no connection between the forgiveness of sin and the blood of a victim. The universal prevalence of sacrifices must, then, be traced to a revelation, either orally transmitted, or recorded in our very nature.

In fine, upon no point is the Bible more clear and full. Here every page is blood-red; patriarch, prophet, apostle, all repeating this truth, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." Morality sends us to our good deeds, our character, our penitence; superstition sends us to forms and sacraments; the Gospel gathers all its inspiration into one glorious note and cries, "Behold the Lamb of God!" In the jurisprudence of heaven our virtues have great *moral worth*, but they have no *mercantile value* so as to purchase anything from God. As far as salvation is concerned, morality is useful only because it leads to religion. The sacred pages know absolutely nothing of any mercy independently of the atonement. "With the Lord is mercy, and with him is *plenteous redemption*, and he shall *redeem* Israel from all his iniquities." "Being justified freely by his grace,

through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." The Gospel reveals no vague abstract benevolence, but love reaching us through a mediator. "God *so* loved the world;"—this language refers not only to the greatness, but to the peculiarity of the love. God's philanthropy did not pardon man immediately, but it found expression through a medium. "God *so* loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

"The Lamb;" you perceive the import of this term. Salvation is not through a moral but through a sacrificial righteousness; through the vicarious sufferings of a victim. I go on, now, and observe, that the Lamb is God's Lamb—"*the Lamb of God.*" For thousands of years had the priests stood immolating those animals which, as the appointed representatives, forfeited their lives for man; but these sacrifices were furnished by those who had sinned. Now the victim is provided by God. A truth this full of sublimity and consolation.

"*Wherewith* shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" This "*Wherewith*" has ever been the pressing difficulty to the convicted soul. With all his holiness, Job saw that between him and Jehovah there must be a mediator. How bitter his complaint, "Neither is there any daysmen betwixt us." Everywhere the earnest imploring cry of humanity—longing to return to God but repelled by a sense of guilt—has been, "Wherewith shall I come?" And the answer; the only answer to that enquiry is found in our text, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

This, indeed, is the great, unique, signal peculiarity of the Gospel. Go where they would, there was never any dispute between the apostles and their hearers—as there is between us and our audiences—with reference to the necessity of a sacrifice for sin; but here was the great difference. In other religions the sinner offered the sacrifice to God. In the Gospel God offers the sacrifice for

sinners. At this day it is impossible for us to feel the force of this singular truth. But if we could place ourselves in the position of a Jew, at the period when Jesus appeared, we would feel the sheer, downright absurdity, of that ribaldry which ascribes Christianity to priest-craft; we would understand the implacable hostility of the priests to such a religion. The pardon of sin was the very matter at issue between the apostles and the Jewish hierarchy. Century after century, the blood of birds and beasts had flowed upon consecrated altars. These altars, priests, sacrifices, oblations are all now to cease; and why? is man no longer a sinner? is humanity perfect? Not at all. They must be discontinued because the true Priest, the real sacrifice has appeared. "The one oblation" of the Gospel is never mentioned, as the offering of men; but always as the amazing gift of God, as the grand master-piece of divine wisdom, power, and love. "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." "The precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." When vindicating the evangelical character of his ministry, the Apostle reminds the Corinthians that he had first laid the foundation of all doctrine and of all piety, by preaching the atonement of Calvary. "For I delivered unto you, *first of all*, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."

That God offers the sacrifice, this is the great thing in the Gospel; this is the Gospel, the "glad tidings of great joy." Wherever the disciples of Christ went, this truth was the substance of all their preaching; Christ crucified was their only theme, their only religion. And whenever their ministry was successful, the former sacrifices were, of course, superseded. In his celebrated letter to Trajan, Pliny informs the emperor, that the effect of Christianity had been to "render the sacrificial victims wholly unsalable." Indeed, my brethren, who

but God could provide the sacrifice demanded for so stupendous an atonement? After all that human wisdom and virtue could do, after seeking to submit himself to the will of God, after all his tears and penances, his zeal and devotion, and though he climb like Isaac up to any self-sacrifice—still, with Isaac, man could only exclaim, "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" It remained for faith to see Christ's day, and, with Abraham the "father of the faithful," rejoicingly to answer, "My son, *God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.*"

You see, then, that the adorable victim was bestowed by God himself. And, now, what shall I say of the blessings conveyed in this gift? The Baptist proclaims the efficacy of this precious sacrifice to remove all the load of guilt. Have you any adequate appreciation of such a deliverance? Contemplate this amazing tragedy,—this catastrophe in which such a being, the "Brightness of the Father's glory," his "Beloved Son," is stretched upon such an altar, as the only possible expiation for our guilt,—and you will have conceptions of the malignity of sin which no language can express. The Scriptures portray in the strongest colors God's abhorrence of this detestable thing. Jesus himself, in his pathetic address to the weeping "daughters of Jerusalem," declares that, dismal as were his sufferings—the humiliations, the insults, the buffetings, the spitting, the scourges, the thorns, the robe, the nails, the shame, the cross—there is a more doleful object demanding our tears, and that this object is sin. But it is when beholding the glory and the august agony of this spotless victim, that we are overwhelmed with views of the atrocity of sin in itself and of our desperate condition. Whether such a horrible evil admitted of a remedy, and what was the remedy, God alone could decide. And he assures us that the blood of his Son cleanseth from all sin. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Not who *took* away; but who now "*taketh* away" sin. Yes, to all the millions in America, Europe, Asia, Africa,—to all—to each—this victim is set forth, as the Lamb of the Passover was prescribed to the Jew. What an object to attract the concentrated gaze of the universe. What an

object to engage and absorb all the passions of my soul. The Israelite knew what he did when he laid his sins upon the appointed substitute; and the Christian acts intelligently, when he rolls the burden of conscious guilt upon this vicarious sufferer.

This is not all. The death of Jesus secures not only a full discharge, but justification. Not only are we reinstated in that favor which was the glory of unfallen man, but we are clothed in a righteousness to which unfallen man could never have aspired. In a word, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him, also freely give us all things?" The Bible constantly represents the redemption by Christ as the donation of treasures which never could have been purchased by human or angelic obedience. The inspired writers exhaust all their powers to extol this magnificent and "unspeakable gift." How deplorable it is to find those who call themselves Christians, depreciating this "mystery hid from ages and generations;" degrading to the level of common humanity him whom the Holy Spirit denominates "The Wonderful," whose pre-eminent dignity constitutes him a sin-offering which vindicates the divine attributes and raises the guilty to immortal glory. He was a good man, they say;—that is, he was not a bad man! And they are greatly alarmed, lest we should too highly exalt him, to whom the Scriptures ascribe the whole work of our salvation; whom we are commanded to honor even as we "honor the Father;" and at whose feet the shining hosts of heaven incessantly cast their crowns, "saying with a loud voice,—Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing,"—"For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests."

III. I had intended to propose the Lamb of God to your meditations in one other aspect. He is our example; and the title by which he is commended in the text suggests those graces of meekness, gentleness, tenderness,

patience, which are peculiar to the Gospel, and which were so perfect in him; but as I have already detained you long enough, I abridge the matter and hasten to a conclusion.

The subject upon which I have addressed you to-day is of infinite importance to us all. It deeply concerns us ministers of the Gospel. We live at a period when the very air is tremulous with excitements, and it is expected that our discourses shall refer to passing events. If I have disappointed you, let my apology be that of Archbishop Leighton in similar circumstances. The pastors of his day, like many now, deemed it their duty to harangue their audiences as to political matters; and at their clerical meetings they catechised each other as to their fidelity in this duty. Upon one of these occasions the question was carried around—"Do you preach for the times?" "Do you preach for the times?" There was but one reply; each answering, "Yes, certainly and constantly; my sermons are such as the times require." At length the inquiry was made of Leighton, who said, "Since so many able ministers preach for the times, suffer one humble servant of Christ to preach for eternity." Men and brethren, this earth has seen but one perfect model of a preacher; it was Jesus; and how did he spend his time? Did he engage in the civil strifes or in any of the ephemeral conflicts of the day? No, he was entirely occupied in proclaiming the everlasting Gospel. Or take John the Baptist. "He was a burning and a shining light;" but was he ever a firebrand? Did he ever degrade himself and his office by forgetting his holy calling and playing the demagogue among the multitudes who hung upon his lips?

Nor can our ministry be a blessing to the world or the church except as we imitate these examples. "Behold the Lamb of God,"—this was all the counsel John gave to his disciples who were about to follow the Redeemer and to be ordained as ambassadors for God. And it is because this glorious, inspiring object is not always before our eyes, that we ministers are what we are; that, with themes which ought to inflame all our being, we are so often formal and lifeless. For my own part, if I could,

without insufferable presumption, write a treatise on the secret of successful preaching, every chapter, every page, every sentence should but repeat and paraphrase the language of our text. Herald of salvation, would you be earnest? behold the Lamb of God. Would you be impressive? behold the Lamb of God. Would you glow with irrepressible ardor for souls? behold the Lamb of God? Would you be direct and pointed in your appeals? behold the Lamb of God. Would you have your heart melt in tenderness? behold the Lamb of God. Would you have the solemnities of eternity, the judgment, heaven, hell, always pressing upon you—firing your zeal, glowing in your breast, throbbing in your pulses, burning upon your lips, beaming in your eye, informing, inspiring all your being and all your thoughts and words with native, spontaneous, resistless power? behold the Lamb of God. The cruel, barbarous heartlessness, the childish rhetorical embellishments, the disgusting theatrical tricks and starts and struts and attitudes, the cold correct dullness, the still colder and more freezing bombast and declamation,—if a minister would avoid these vices which too often dishonor the pulpit;—if he would be simple, easy, natural; if he would preach not *before* but *to* his audience, rousing the consciences of sinners, and elevating the characters of Christians; if he would pray, and study, and labor so as to be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed; let him behold the Lamb of God. In a word, the entire art of preaching; the whole system of homiletics; whatever can equip and adorn the sacred orator; whatsoever things are original, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are true; if there be any virtue, if any grace, if any dignity, if any eloquence, if any glory;—all, all are condensed in this single, comprehensive, sublime counsel, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Our subject addresses itself most solemnly to those who have neglected the Gospel; who have hitherto been indifferent to an object which engages the admiring, adoring attention of angels and archangels. That there is such a class upon this earth where the Lamb of God lived and

suffered—among those for whom he died—is, to a devout mind, a grief and a marvel. My friends, in this astonishing apathy you are entirely alone, you are a wonder to heaven and to hell. Look where we will in the revelation vouchsafed to man, Christ is the great central object. Even Moses, the representative of the law, lifts up the serpent as the emblem of the Redeemer. You profess to honor this revelation; what infatuation, then, is yours, when you remain unconcerned about the Saviour.

That he has come into the world, is the amazing fact which sheds new interest upon everything; and to his cross must be traced all those influences which are now "shaping the growing stature of the world." Pious men make pilgrimages to Palestine; they call it "The Holy Land," and find it good to be there, as they feel the inspirations of those spots where this Being lingered, and prayed, and wept, and expired. To a sanctified heart the whole earth is now a Palestine, a holy land breathing and burning of Him; and everything connected with the earth is consecrated. The ground is hallowed, since he trod upon it; the skies are hallowed, since they bent over him; the sun is hallowed, since its beams fell upon him by day; the stars are hallowed, since they looked down on him at night; the winds are hallowed, since they heard and obeyed his voice; and the waves, since he walked upon them and stilled their clamor. Mountains are hallowed, for he climbed their sides to commune with his Father; valleys are hallowed, for he dwelt there with his disciples; gardens are hallowed, for Gethsemane was a garden; deserts are hallowed, for a desert was the scene of his temptation and victory; villages are hallowed, for Bethlehem and Bethany were villages; cities are hallowed, for he poured out his flowing anguish over a city. In short, upon every earthly object there has been flung a new lustre, since this Being stooped to our humanity. The grave, even the cross, is now invested with sacred glory. How is it, my dear hearer, that you are unaffected? that you live as if the Lamb of God had never visited this world, had never stood upon its surface bathed in grief for you, and for you expired upon that dreadful altar? Oh, if after all

this, you perish———but you must not perish. It will never do. By the love of Christ, by his humiliation, by his tears, his groans, his bloody sweat, his agony and death, I conjure you to open your eyes, to see your guilt and danger, and to "behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world."

There are those before me who are not indifferent to this great object, who are deeply anxious to secure an interest in him; and to them the exhortation in our text comes home at once. Sin and a Saviour from Sin,—these—even more than the existence of a God—are the themes of revelation. And without terms or conditions,—with only this qualification that you feel your guiltiness and are willing, penitently to renounce your sins and to receive him,—the Lamb of God stands revealed before you and for you. The sacrifice for sins is now finished. If for you had been offered all the hecatombs which have for centuries smoked with blood, they would be worthless compared with this "offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." All that is comprehended in the great salvation becomes yours by faith.—To this faith you have long felt yourselves "shut up."—And now to-day while it is called to-day—from how many voices—the voices of reason, conscience, the Holy Spirit in your own bosoms, the voices of the redeemed in glory who have been saved by his precious blood, the voices of the lost in hell who perished because they neglected that blood—from how many voices peals upon you the exhortation of our text, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." "Look unto him and be saved."

A look of penitence; can you look on him whom your sins have pierced and not mourn for him, and be in bitterness for your vileness and ingratitude?

A look of faith; though the sins of all the world were on you,—the sins of the old world,—of Sodom and Gomorrah—of all the guilty generations which have insulted and blasphemed the God of heaven and sunk into perdition—though all were crushing you down;—here is a sacrifice which can pluck you as a brand from the burning, and raise you to glory, honor and immortality.

A direct look; do not be averting your eyes to your prayers, your promises, your reformations; nothing can avail but the blood of the Lamb, and that is all sufficient. If you turn your back to the sun, your shadow will stretch out before you. Wheel around, and the shadow is gone. So, while you turn from Christ, you will see only your unworthiness and vileness. Look to him, and you will see only his dazzling merit and righteousness.

In fine, a look of hope, confidence, joy. John was a voice crying in the wilderness, preparing the way of the Lord; and such a voice hath been heard in your bosom. Sorrow hath saddened your being, affliction hath made your heart desolate, or convictions have shed gloom over your mind; and, now, that the way has been prepared, the Holy Spirit is seeking to glorify Jesus in your soul. Listen to his voice; welcome him who is waiting to comfort, to sanctify you, and who will never cast you off.

Christians, my beloved brethren, what shall I say to you? As John pointed his disciples to Jesus, so my highest ambition is to direct your faith to him, and to keep it forever settled there. It is little to say that the word "Behold" is a note of admiration. True, all other objects are turned into insignificance, compared with this prodigy. "He was seen of angels;" their admiring gaze was fixed upon incarnate Deity, upon "Emmanuel, God with us"—a mystery more amazing than any which heaven could present. But it is not only with admiration, it is with appropriating faith, with joy unspeakable and full of glory, that you behold the Lamb of God.

He may be as a root out of dry ground to others, but to you he is "the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely." Your eyes have been opened to discover the greatness and suitableness and beauty of this majestic substitute who offers himself to Eternal Justice for you. Upon him you have cast your souls with all their hopes and interests. And now let me remind you, that in him is all your spiritual life, and from him you must derive all your spiritual strength. In the eleventh chapter of Hebrews the apostle surrounds us with an illustrious galaxy of the faithful, and proposes them to our contemplation. Soon, however, in the twelfth chapter, he bids

us concentrate our gaze not on them, but on Jesus.—Nor is it enough that you have looked to him, you must still be looking unto Jesus. The fire in the temple was from heaven, but it needed to be fed. Make him the object to which you always look first and midst and last; and let all the charms of this earth be despised, when they would come in competition with his loveliness.—Look earnestly at him; with intense, longing desires to know more of his love, to enjoy more of his friendship.—Look steadfastly at him; not with affections which are ever wavering between him and the world, but with habitual, unremitted devotion. Let the blood of Christ be warm in your hearts. Let the love of Christ constrain you; let it be the motive of all your services and self-denials. It is love which not only sweetens our sacrifices, but makes them acceptable to God. Let the fullness of Christ cause you to exult in those treasures which are yours. He is wisdom for your ignorance, strength for your weakness, righteousness for your guilt, sanctification for your corruption, redemption from all the thraldom of your apostasy.

Do you lament the hardness of your heart? behold the Lamb of God, and you will feel that obduracy dissolving in ingenuous grief and tenderness. Are you tempted to yield to sin? behold the Lamb of God, and you will cast away in horror the cup crimsoned with his blood. Are you cold and withered in your affections? behold the Lamb of God; the purple shower which falls from the cross is to the soul what dew and rain are to the parched fields. The trials and sorrows of life, are these grievous to you? do you sometimes murmur at these? Behold the Lamb of God. Think of his sorrows; and you will exclaim, "My light afflictions which are but for a moment." The painful separations and humiliations of obedience,—you wish at times to shrink from these; but turn your eye to him who for you "endured the cross, despising the shame;" and you will "take pleasure in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake;" you will esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of the universe.

I feel, however, that I will never have done. "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." As all light is garnered in the sun, so all the affluence of Deity is treasured up in this Lamb of God, that we may be enriched from him. While life lasts, behold him, Christian, and you can want nothing. When death comes, behold him, and you will fear nothing. Stephen saw "heaven opened," and his "face shone" because "he saw Jesus;" and fixing your eye upon this loadstar of eternity, your parting soul will be irradiated with celestial glory. Nor will your gaze cease after death. It will be only clearer, more adoring, more ravishing; and O how pleasant to behold the Lamb in the midst of the throne; after all the contempt, insult, injury heaped upon him here, to see him crowned with glory, encircled by the praises of eternity.

Ye blessed inhabitants of heaven, ye spirits of the just made perfect, ye shining multitudes around the throne, ye ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, and numbers without number,—we hear from afar your pealing anthems; and worthy is he—that peerless Lamb—of all your noblest worship. But not always shall we be detained here upon this sad earth, compelled thus to listen at a distance to your choral harmonies.—The term of our exile will soon be over; and we too shall see him whom our souls love. We are coming. We are coming. Sinners like yourselves and washed in the same blood, we are coming; through clouds and storms we are cleaving our way and pressing on to you. Soon shall we join your exulting throng. Soon shall we stand in your midst, gazing as you gaze upon his beauty; adoring him as you adore him; casting our crowns at his feet as you cast yours; and with hallelujahs long and loud and transporting as yours, crying, "Worthy is the Lamb!" "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion, forever and ever, AMEN."

Sermon Ninth.

THE REDEEMER'S AGONY AND PRAYER.

"And he went a little further and fell on his face and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." "And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." MATT. xxvi: 39. LUKE xxii: 43, 44.

THE entire Gospel—all its salvation, its doctrines, its practical piety—is comprehended in two great truths: the atonement, and the example of Jesus. Without the atonement a sinner can never satisfy the demands of justice—no matter how profuse his tears, how profound his repentance, how unstinted his charity. But vainly do we profess to have faith in the blood of Christ, unless by our characters and lives we attest the vitality of that faith; unless we obey him who says, "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

I. It is in this twofold aspect the texts just read present Jesus to our meditations. Let us develop these passages; and, contemplating the adorable Redeemer, first, as offering himself a sacrifice for our sins, let us study his mysterious sufferings in the garden, and the prayer extorted from him by his anguish.

In the verse quoted from Matthew we have the Saviour's first prayer. "And he went a little further, and fell on his face and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." Now what was this "cup?"

and what is the meaning of this imploring supplication wrung from the adorable sufferer by the first taste of its bitterness?

To comprehend the answer to these most important questions, we must recollect that when "the Word was made flesh," Jesus took our humanity with all its infirmities, and was in all things fashioned as we are, only without the taint of sin. As the divine nature could not share in the weakness of the human nature, so it did not communicate its strength and glory to that nature. The man Jesus grew up from childhood, and his was that frail, forlorn humanity which, in its highest vigor and beauty, is "crushed before the moth," and is compared by the Scriptures to the grass that withereth in a day, to the flower that fades before the blast. This humanity, we know, is greatly dependent upon sympathy, cries out for sympathy in its trials and sorrows, and yearns for sympathy in proportion to its refinement. Jesus assumed our nature with this element in all its most intense solicitude. The scene in Gethsemane reminds us of this; for he takes with him the three apostles in whom he found most congeniality, and again and again, he turns to them in the anguish of his spirit.

Add, too, the fearful power of temptation over beings constituted as we are; and that upon Him were concentrated and exhausted all the unsearchable artifices of the Tempter. I mention this, because there can be no doubt that on this eventful night the whole power of the arch-enemy was spent in a final assault upon the Son of God. After the temptation in the wilderness it is said, "The Devil departed from him *for a season;*"—language which intimates that he would one day renew his hellish attack. In anticipation of this very scene Jesus said, "The Prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me." "This is your hour and the power of darkness." And we may form some conception of the terribleness of the conflict, when we see him literally resisting unto blood; and when we remember the energy with which he seeks to forearm his drowsy disciples,—coming to them after each successive encounter, and uttering that earnest admonition,—

"Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak."

If you enter into these truths you will be prepared to interpret, though, of course, very inadequately, the recoil and cry of the Saviour's humanity amidst the mysterious horrors of the garden. It is said that he was "in an agony." The term *agony* means a severe struggle.—His agony was a struggle between human weakness and the terrific views then disclosed to his soul of that death which was at hand;—a death in which he was to be immolated as a sacrifice for sin, and to exhaust the penalties of the law.

Let us entertain correct views upon a subject so important and yet so mysterious. To die in sin is a fearful thing, because we carry within us the sense of moral pollution, because the conscience is filled with remorse for personal guilt, because the soul is oppressed by a "fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." I need not tell you that for the "Holy, Harmless and Undefiled," death had none of these poisoned fangs.—He could confidently challenge the malignity of the world and say, "Which of you accuseth me of sin?" Death is formidable because the devil, "who hath the power of death," terrifies the soul with his suggestions; but the accuser could "find nothing in him." Amidst the anguish of Gethsemane and the desolation of Calvary, he addresses his Father in all the filial confidence of a dearly beloved son. It is still "*my* Father," "*my* God." He "knew that he came from God and went to God."

But, though Jesus "knew no sin," he was made "sin for us." He suffered "the just for the unjust." "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." By his interposition in our behalf "he tasted death for every man."—death as "the wages of sin." Never can we comprehend the mental wretchedness with which his soul was smitten and convulsed, but this we know; that "he bare our sins in his own body on the tree;" that to each man "the sting of death is sin;" and myriads of these

venomed stings pierced and lacerated the very core of his heart.

The agony of that dismal night was not, as many suppose, the effect of some transient grief which then oppressed the Saviour's mind; it was caused by the clear apprehensions he had of the cross and the terrible sacrifice he was about to offer on that altar. Upon this point we are not left to speculation or conjecture. The inspired record gives us direct information. It declares that "in the days of his flesh he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able *to save him from death*, and was heard in that he feared." The Scriptures constantly testify, that to die for our sins was the very purpose for which Christ Jesus came into the world. This death he himself, more than once, designated as "the cup" of which he was to drink. During all his ministry this consummation was in his thoughts; its anticipation mingled even with the splendors of Mount Tabor; for the celestial visitants there spake with him "of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem;" and as his weary pilgrimage wore on, it cast a bleak shadow over all his deportment, a sadness which at times deepened into gloom. Only four days before the present crisis, he exclaimed, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father save me from this hour." Scarcely, however, has this prayer escaped his burdened heart, before his faith hastens after it and recalls it; and he says, "But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father glorify thy name! Then came there a voice from heaven saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

But now, in the garden, there rises upon his vision an overwhelming prospect of the dreadful catastrophe. It had been at some distance in all his former anticipations; now the dismal tragedy is about to commence. Before, he had been sustained by the presence and love of his friends; now he is entirely alone, all contact with human sympathy has ceased. It is the hour when the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners; it is "the hour and the power of darkness." He is brought to the mouth of the terrible raging furnace into which he must enter; before which his feeble human nature

faints and fails like grass in a heated oven. How excruciating was his anguish, we may judge from the sacred narrative in which there can be no exaggeration. "He began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy, and saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death;" meaning by this last expression, that "the sorrows of death compassed him, and the pains of hell were getting hold upon him." And see, too, the effects upon his physical frame. Again and again had he defied all the power of his enemies, encountering their insults and violence with calm intrepidity; but no sooner do his lips touch the brim of this cup and sip its first drop, than his flesh and heart quail, and he falls to the earth upon his face. Hunger, thirst, fatigue, pain, seemed to make no impression upon his vigorous human constitution; but now, although the night is cold, (John xviii: 18) his body is bathed in sweat, and that sweat is blood gushing from every pore.

What seems at first, however, to be most surprising in this history is the Saviour's prayer; for did he really desire that the mission upon which he came might be defeated? that the atonement might not be finished?—Perish such a thought! Had he so willed, the awful drama would at once have been arrested. In reference to his crucifixion, he uttered this imperial language, "I lay down my life for the sheep. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father and he shall presently give me twelve legions of angels?" In a word, he had not yet been seized; the spot was lonely; it was towards midnight; and had he chosen to do so, he might easily have eluded his enemies.

It is certain then that in the steadfast soul of the Redeemer there was no shrinking from the sublime enterprise to which he had devoted himself. But if this were so, what is the meaning of his prayer that, "if possible the cup might pass away"? As already intimated, many commentators get rid of this seeming difficulty by sup-

posing that the prayer refers to some momentary gloom pressing upon the Saviour's spirit; but this is plainly a mistake. By the "cup" he clearly intends the sore travail of his soul in the approaching sacrifice. Instead, then, of seeking to explain away a fact which is incontestable, let us attempt to penetrate its depths and to interpret the truths it teaches.

For this purpose let me again remind you that Jesus was as truly human as he was divine. "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also took part of the same." He assumed our nature; and in the experience of this nature, no matter how purified and elevated, it is one thing for the heroic spirit to devote itself with generous enthusiasm to a fearful sacrifice, and quite another thing for the weak flesh actually to endure the extremity without any fainting. The baptism may be longed for, and yet there may be a shivering when the cold waters go over our heads. In the eternal counsels it was deemed necessary that the adorable victim should fully comprehend the bitter passion of the cross. From us God mercifully conceals the future with its sufferings; but in the substitution of an innocent person for the guilty, it was indispensable that the self-immolation should be voluntary, and with a clear apprehension of the consequences.

Some foresight of his sufferings had before brought the soul of Jesus into a paroxysm of conflict and prayer. "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified." "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." That, however, was only a transient glimpse of the approaching storm; now all its waves and billows are about to go over him.

Not only, therefore, was the Redeemer's oblation of himself the result of ancient, deliberate purpose, so that he was "The Lamb slain before the foundation of the world," but he was made to taste some prelibations of the mysterious chalice; his soul groaned with the premonitory pains of its bitter travail. Hence the terrible agony which convulsed his [illegible] His weak humanity

recoiled from the fierceness of the winepress which he was to tread alone; his sinless, immortal humanity resented the loathsome approaches of such a death—an ignominious death, and the death of a criminal. For a moment the conflict was so dreadful that his heart and his flesh cried out to the living God in sobs and prayers, in "strong crying and tears." These tears are not mentioned in the narrative, but they intensify our conceptions of the forlornness and wretchedness of his spirit. From the depths of his human nature, thus rent and torn, ascends the supplication we are examining, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not as I will but as thou wilt." That cup was charged with ingredients which only Eternal Justice could have collected, and no mere mortal could sip one drop of its wormwood and live. The afflicting thunders of divine wrath were now to be quenched in his blood. He was placed before the very jaws of the pit, with hell vomiting its sulphurous smoke, and dashing its red lightnings in his face. Into a few hours were to be condensed miseries which should equal the everlasting damnation due to our sins. And amidst these torments he was to be forsaken by his Father, suffering a suspension of that ineffable communion which from eternity had been to him the source and essence of celestial beatitude. This horrible tempest was now about to pour its vengeance upon his solitary spirit. And—his nature shrinking as the ghastly deluge begins to discharge itself—he prays that "*if it be possible,*" if his Father's glory and man's salvation can be otherwise secured—the storm might pass away.

You now comprehend the Redeemer's prayer; and, thus understood, it ought often to engage our devout reflections and be made the subject of our adoring meditation.

While listening to the sobbings and cryings of Gethsemane, who can help feeling that sin and its punishment are things appalling and horrible? As we behold the amazement and consternation of the Redeemer at the execution of that sentence for which he had been constantly preparing, what fearful presentiments insinuate

themselves into our minds as to the doom of those who die in their sins. Again, how impossible is the salvation of sinners except through the atonement. How passing knowledge is the love of him, who amidst such dreariness and agony, still thought of man, and would not let the cup pass, if our redemption required him to drink it. In short, the exceeding great and precious assurances of the Gospel, that all the blessings of time and eternity are ours, if we are Christ's; "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things."

I read just now that remarkable verse from the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which the apostle speaks of the strong crying and tears of the Redeemer. In that passage it is said, "He was heard in that he feared;" the cry of his human weakness in its mortal distress was answered. But how was this, since he prayed to him who was able to deliver him from death and was not delivered from death? Luke explains this point, he informs us as to this answer. "There appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him." And, now, see the effect of this celestial invigoration of his fainting humanity.

Observe it in the two prayers which he afterwards uttered. We usually suppose that he repeated his first petition; but this is entirely to misunderstand the teachings of the Holy Spirit. Luke simply relates the visit of the angel, adding this remark, "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly"—more earnestly than in the first prayer. But Matthew records the words of the second supplication, and also of the third. "He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again; for their eyes were heavy. And he left them and went away again and prayed the third time, saying the same words." Stung by the thorn in his flesh, Paul thrice besought the Lord that it might depart from him; each request terminating in himself; and the answer was, "My grace is sufficient for thee." It was only in the first terrible agony that Jesus prayed with

any reference to his own misery; and then he added these words, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." He is reminded by the heavenly messenger, that the cup cannot pass, and the purposes of the atonement be accomplished. His weak human nature is "strengthened," too, by this radiant ministry. And immediately every thought of himself is forever banished. He now prays "more earnestly" than he had done for himself, that his Father's will may be done at whatever cost to him. "If this cup" (since this cup) "may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done." This is his only petition; and he utters this "more earnestly"—with more intense fervor than his first supplication, though that had been with "strong crying and tears." He has now extraordinary views of the terrible consequences to man, if the sacrifice be not consummated. He has also been made to feel the feebleness of his humanity, its absolute dependence upon supernatural succor. Therefore with redoubled earnestness, again and again, he prays that he might be supported, that his Father might be glorified upon the earth, and his church be redeemed by his blood.

You see, then, in the two prayers succeeding it, what efficacy there was in this angelic visit. The celestial vigor it infused is still more striking in the Saviour's subsequent conduct. Calm, collected, filled with divine intrepidity, he goes to meet his executioners. Pointing to the band whose torches were now beginning to flash among the dark olive branches, he says to his disciples, "The hour is come; behold the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go, lo he that betrayeth me is at hand." Confronting the company of armed soldiers, he announces himself with a majesty so commanding, that these veterans quail and fall to the earth before the mysterious power of his presence. Demanding that his disciples should not be harmed, he at once surrenders himself. And when Peter attempts a rescue, he rebukes him, saying, "Put up thy sword into its sheath; the cup which my Father hath given me shall I not drink it?" What followed, it is unnecessary for me to tell you; for you know how he did drink that cup;

how he stretched out his hand steadfastly, and took it and in silence drained every drop of the wormwood and gall in that terrible chalice. "He drank at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury, drank the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out;" that we might "take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord." He went meekly forth to the judgment, went as a lamb to the slaughter, was dumb as a sheep before her shearers, was oppressed, was afflicted, yet opened not his mouth; that we might be healed by his stripes, that before the dread tribunal we might not be speechless, but might, with unspeakable joy and assurance exclaim, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

II. Thus far we have been "considering him" who was called Jesus because he would deliver his people from their sins. I pass now to the other aspect in which we proposed to contemplate this adorable Being, regarding him as our example—as the model of that temper which becomes a child of God at all times, but especially when called to suffer affliction.

Studied in Gethsemane, the example of Jesus is unspeakably precious and consoling because it throws a sanction and sacredness over feelings which stern casuists have condemned as sinful. In the perfect humanity of the Redeemer we here find sensibilities which quail at the prospect, or shrink under the pressure of calamities and sufferings. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, neither *faint* when thou art rebuked of him;" such is the admonition addressed to those who are called to mourn; but let us never suppose that any censure is conveyed by this exhortation. No; it is the tender language of a Father who pities his poor children, knowing their frame and remembering that they are dust. And in the history before us we see this infirmity and fainting in him whose whole conduct is an illustration of perfect submission to the divine will.

If we are Christians at all, this is certain, that our fears and distresses will cause us to cast our burdens upon the Lord; solitary prayer will be our instinctive resource. Like Jesus, we will, indeed, desire the sympathy of the few who love us; but, like him, we will turn from all human comforters and roll our anguished spirit upon God,—upon the compassions of our Heavenly Father. And while thus pouring out our hearts before him, while we are not to be peremptory, we may be importunate; it is natural, it is proper to pray that we may be spared or delivered; it is right to say, if it be possible, let this cup pass away."

For afflictions are not in themselves blessings, they are evils from which we ought to shrink. "No chastening for the present is joyous, but grievous." Nay, afflictions may become temptations; "Give me not poverty lest I steal." In a word, our very natures deprecate pain and sorrow. It is, therefore, proper to say, "O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me." If it be possible, spare me this bitter bereavement which threatens to rend from my heart this parent, this sister, this wife, this child, who is dearer to me than life itself. If it be possible, heal this disease which has stretched me upon a bed of languishing, which seems about to hurry me to the tomb, or to doom me to years of protracted misery. If it be possible, avert from me these reverses and losses which are impending, which should cast suspicion upon my character, and consign my children to all the humiliations and temptations of poverty. If it be possible, deliver me from this visitation which has crippled me for thy work, and keeps me from that service which is my meat and my drink, my strength, consolation, joy, and for which alone I desire to live. Thou knowest, O Lord of hosts, how amiable to me are thy tabernacles; how my soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; how my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God; how I esteem those blessed who dwell in thy house, and envy the sparrow and the swallow that can frequent thine altars. My King, my God, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away; save me from these dumb Sabbaths which are killing me, from

these voiceless sermons and prayers and exhortations which burn like fire in my bones. *

In this recoiling, these entreaties, there is nothing criminal. Still, however, just in proportion to the depth of our piety, will be our spirit of submission, nay our preference of the divine will to our own. Even in the Saviour's first agony, amidst the wail for help wrung out of his soul by the first crushing blow of the tempest, we find the predominance of filial submission; and soon there was in him the entire supremacy of his Father's will. When pain and anguish take hold upon us, our wills may for a while mutiny. But as we receive light and strength, we will be "still;"—we will calm our ruffled spirits; we will quell every murmur; with a love which casts out fear and gives God our unlimited confidence we will exclaim, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" And as the Saviour's entire sanctification of himself to the sacrifice was rendered more glorious by his previous agony, so our submission will give more honor to God, and bring richer fruits into our own souls because it is a victory to which we passed through the bitterest conflict.

I know, my brethren, that to "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" is no easy attainment. Sometimes we are called to acquiesce in dispensations where all is inscrutable, as to which "clouds and darkness are round about him," and we exclaim, Verily thou art a God that hideth thyself." Jesus requires his disciples to adjourn to another period the solution of some things which he does in this present economy. It still pleases the Father to bruise many of his dearest children. God has had but one Son without sin; never one without sorrow; and sometimes our hearts are tempted to murmur and repine. It was not for nothing that Jesus said "Blessed are they who shall not be offended in me." For how many of those dear to him measure

* This sermon was preached, April 12, 1862, after a severe inflammation of the throat which had prevented the author from preaching for several Sabbaths.

the length of their pilgrimage by the graves they leave behind them. How many drag on their days bleakly and heavily—their years all winters. How many see all their purposes broken off, their hopes withered; and to them God appoints care-worn aspects, and hearts cleft by silent but sharp endurance. How many, wasted by disease, or consumed by hidden grief, grow old in youth, and sink into the valley of years, bending, not under age, but misery. How many go to weep at tombs which have made the whole world a tomb to them;—standing over which they feel that for them the brightness of life, the bitterness of death are passed. In short, how many find life one incessant struggle, one scene of toil and suffering, in which they can hope for nothing from earth, and can only seek not to reel and sink under breach after breach by which they are broken.

But it is the very office of faith to sustain the soul when flesh and heart are failing. Amidst gloomy clouds and chilling blasts faith can say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul"—Jesus is thine, the promises are thine, the consolations of God are thine, eternal glory is thine, and thou, thou art dejected!—"Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God." Now, in the darkest night, faith can see and feel an angel strengthening us to bear what God sends. And one day an angel will roll the stone away, and from out the grave where we thought all our hope and joys had been buried, shall come forth their resurrection, their life. "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." We have seen what the Saviour's "*nevertheless*" comprehended—what an eternity of wretchedness was concentrated in that word; and whatever may be the import of our "*nevertheless*," whatever we are called to endure, let us remember that we "suffer according to the will of God;" "let the same mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus;" "let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt us in due time, casting all our care upon him, for he careth for us." Let us consider him who endured such things for us, lest at any time we be

weary and faint in our minds. And let us not only contemplate, but let us follow him who hath left us an example that we should walk in his steps.

Two traits in the character of the Redeemer are especially brought out in the history before us, and these ought to be the peculiar objects of study and imitation to us. The first is his habitual sense of his Father's presence and love. Amidst all the solitariness and anguish of Gethsemane this filial confidence was never for a moment interrupted; nay, his communion with his Father became more intimate and earnest as darkness and sorrow gathered over him.

When he crossed the brook and entered the scene of that dismal tragedy he took the eleven with him. Advancing further into the shades of the garden, he is accompanied by only Peter and James and John. But they must stop; they cannot penetrate the depths amidst whose gloom his mysterious agony bows him to the earth, and forces a crimson sweat through his pores.—*There*, only one can be with him; it is his Father. "Ye shall leave me alone, and yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me."

Now in this sense of loneliness and want of human sympathy, we must have fellowship with him, and we ought instinctively to ascend to the same source of strength and consolation. In its deepest sorrows and conflicts every human spirit must be alone. Earthly friendship and companionship may go some way in their sympathy; they may cross Cedron with us. Christian love may go still further; it may enter Gethsemane. But when "the strong hour conquers us;" when afflictions rend the soul,—driving the blood through the pores of the heart, if not of the body,—and when, in this hour of darkness and weakness, the violence of temptation wrings from us strong crying and tears; then, oh then, we must be entirely alone. For each heart knows its own bitterness. Its trials and sorrows are made up of things which the dearest human affection cannot share, cannot know. But God knows all; and if we would be sustained, we must cultivate the filial, confiding spirit of Jesus.—If we would not be moved, we must set the Lord always

before us, as a Father pitying our infirmities, listening to the voice of our weeping; we must hear him saying to us, "Fear not I am with thee, when thou passest through the waters they shall not overflow thee, when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee."

The other grace emphatically commended to us by this passage in the Saviour's life is his perfect resignation to his Father's will or, rather, his adoring preference of that will, even when smitten by the most inscrutable and overwhelming wretchedness. Under the first appalling burst of the tempest his cry is, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt;" and as the storm beats upon his uncovered head with accumulating fury, he prays, with increasing earnestness, that not his will but his Father's may be done. Let us cultivate this spirit. Rest assured that living upon "every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God," living upon God's will revealed or unrevealed, acquiescing in that will because it is the will of God, and thus rising above our joys and sorrows to God himself—this is the only, the heavenly secret of peace, holiness, happiness. We must lose ourselves in God's supremacy; and then shall be realized in us that promise, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." All impatience arises from ignorance of God and of ourselves.—"Be still and know that I am God." "Acquaint now thyself with him and be at peace, thereby good shall come unto thee." The love, the wisdom of that Father whom Jesus here teaches us to trust and reverence, his parental designs in all his chastisements,—let these thoughts penetrate our souls and bring them into unfaltering submission under every dispensation.

"*My will:*" blindness, weakness, selfishness. "*Thy will:*" the decisions of him who is perfectly right in all his ways—of whose throne righteousness and judgment are the habitations, though clouds and darkness may be round about him;—would I thwart these decisions and prefer confusion and disorder? the plans of him who is the only wise God, who alone knows what is best for me;—shall I seek to defeat these plans, and to follow my own

ignorance? In a word, infinite love and mercy which are engaged to cause all things to work together for my good, and by exposure, suffering, experience, to elevate me to a higher life and build up all that is spiritual and glorious in my nature; the will of that Saviour who, in full view of the dreadful inundation about to go over him, "endured the cross and despised the shame" for me while I was yet an enemy; the will of that God who, amidst the anguish of the garden and the cross, spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for me;—how can I resist all this?—how can I ever doubt this mercy and love? "The cup that my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" "Yea, though he slay me, yet will I trust him."

In conclusion, let the subject upon which we have been meditating convince us how vain are all hopes that any can be saved except through the great atonement.—If in the jurisprudence of heaven this had been "possible," such a victim would not have been stretched upon such an altar. "There is salvation in none other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Come, then, my friend, come just as you are; come now, and cast your guilty, helpless soul on him who hath paid the full price of redemption. Nor let any sense of sin deter you. Never again can an audience be assembled so steeped in guilt as that which was addressed by Peter on the day of Pentecost; yet speaking to them—their lips dripping with blasphemy—their hands red with the blood of the Lord of Glory—hear him say "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins"—"every one of you." But I am the wretch who suborned Judas to betray him and paid him the thirty pieces of silver;—"Every one of you." But I led the band at midnight into the garden and seized him as a malefactor;—"Every one of you." But I conducted him to Pilate's bar, I dragged him to Herod's hall, and there stripped him, and put the robe upon him, and pressed the thorns into his brow, and struck him in the face and spit upon him;—"Every one of you." But I followed him through the streets and joined the infuriated rabble in jeering and

insulting and cursing him, as he moved slowly along bending under the cruel load;—"Every one of you."—But I laid the cross upon the ground, and stretched that sacred form upon it and drove the spikes through his mangled and quivering hands and feet;—"Every one of you." But I plunged the spear into his side, and the blood and water are upon my head to curse me forever;—"Every one of you."—"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins." God can say, can do nothing more to assure the vilest that in the atonement there is present, full eternal salvation for them.

And let the example we have been studying raise our souls to a habitual, intelligent, filial acquiescence at all times and under every paternal chastisement. "Father, not my will but thine!"—this cry coming sincerely from the heart, is not only a prayer, but a prayer already answered.

As to the past, let us cherish the spirit of resignation. We are prone, in looking back, to reproach ourselves, to afflict ourselves with vain regrets over something done or left undone. All these reflections are wrong; they savor of atheism by forgetting that all was ordered by unerring wisdom and unchanging love. Too sadly does experience teach some of us the error of those who tell us that years will efface the impression made upon the heart by the strokes of affliction. Alas, where we have truly loved, time, instead of healing our wounds, is only like a river which is constantly deepening its channel. There is but one consolation in these bitter musings and retrospects; it is to ascend at once to God, and to lose ourselves in him. "I was dumb; I opened not my mouth, because *thou* didst it."

For the future, take no anxious thought. These gloomy forebodings are sinful, for they imply a want of confidence in God. Perfect love would cast out these tormenting fears. But they are still more foolish. They fill us with distress about evils which may never come; or which, if they do come, will bring with them strength for our day—the morrow thus caring for itself.

And under present afflictions and trials, the habitual contemplation of a suffering Redeemer will be the most effectual antidote to all complaints, the most fruitful source of patience and filial submission. "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same mind." Can we follow him—the holy, harmless, undefiled—as he crosses Cedron—and falls convulsed upon the ground, filling the air of Gethsemane with his groans,—and as he expires upon the cross;—can we see him endure all this for us, and yet murmur at those sufferings which are needful for our souls? O cup, which my Father gives me, however bitter, though thy portion be gall and wormwood, thou art medicine for my spiritual health and prosperity. May I have grace to feel that thou art welcome. May we all esteem it our highest honor and felicity to suffer with Jesus, that we may be glorified with him.

To this adorable Redeemer, and to the Father of an infinite majesty, and to the Holy Spirit, be praise, worship and glory forever. AMEN.

Sermon Tenth.

JOHN'S MESSAGE TO JESUS.

"Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see."—MATTHEW xi: 3, 4.

"AS John fulfilled his course;" there is in this language something very affecting and instructive. The beginning of a man's existence resembles the little well-spring of a stream whose course and destination none can foretell. Like rivers onward roll our lives.—We may be renowned or obscure; we may become benefactors or scourges of our race; our career may be calm and bright, or dark and turbulent; but to each a period is allotted, after which we are confounded together in the tomb:—even as rivers the most celebrated and the most unknown, the tranquil and the impetuous, those which desolate and those which bless the earth, all traverse spaces accurately prescribed, and then mingle their waters and lose their names and distinctions in the ocean.

"John fulfilled his course;" and very pleasant it is to turn from the universal selfishness of our race, and to study the biography of such a man. He was indeed "a burning and a shining light;" and though his beams were quenched at noonday and in blood, yet hasting never, resting never, he bravely and triumphantly accomplished his glorious mission; nor can we lift our eyes from the common range, the dead level of human character to such courage, devotion, magnanimity, entire superiority to all earthly appetites and passions, combined with such profound humility, without confessing, that of all who had been born of women, a greater than John

had not appeared upon the scene of mortal affairs. It is strengthening, rejoicing to contemplate that grand soul; but can there be a more substantial mortification than that which accompanies the consciousness, that we belong to the same species, have the same faculties, enjoy vastly superior advantages, and yet are what we are.

This heroic and extraordinary man was in prison, when he sent to Jesus a deputation of his disciples bearing the message recorded in the text: "Now when John had heard in prison, the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come or look we for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again these things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever is not offended in me."

This question and its answer are so remarkable, that I shall make them the subject of our meditations to-day.

I. "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" This enquiry furnishes our first topic; and it deserves our closest attention, for what was John's motive in sending such a message? We are at no loss to account for the variety of popular opinions as to Jesus; some saying that "he was John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias or one of the prophets." We at once penetrate, too, the hypocrisy of the Pharisees who said to him, "How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ tell us plainly." We every day hear people affecting doubts which are only pretexts for their sins, and seeking to lull their consciences by pretending that they are waiting for more light. But how are we to explain this enquiry coming from the great harbinger? Two solutions of the problem may be proposed, only two worthy of discussion. For, as to the supposition that John meant to upbraid and quicken him whom he knew to be the Messiah—it is such a charge of presumption, as ought not even to be mentioned in the pulpit. Let us examine these two interpretations.

Now, taking the case simply as it is recorded, the first natural impression assuredly is, that some misgivings as to the Messiahship of Jesus had insinuated themselves into the mind of the Baptist. This idea is, however, indignantly rejected by most commentators, who maintain, that it was not for himself, but for his disciples that John sent this message; they were incredulous, and he sends them to Jesus that they may be convinced by him.— This is the common interpretation, and one point must certainly be conceded to its advocates. We must all see why John's disciples would naturally discredit the claims of Jesus. Consider the contrast between these two contemporaneous teachers. He whom they admired "came neither eating nor drinking;" his piety was austere, ascetical, resembling that of the ancient prophets. He was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord." Commissioned to arouse and rebuke a people sunk in sensuality and superstition, his entire work was in the spirit and power of Elijah.— In the wilderness, and beside the flowing waters of the Jordan, his cry still was, "Flee from the wrath to come." His ministry was that of the storm and earthquake and fire, which should awaken men's souls, and hold them in mute awe, in solemn attention, for the "still small voice." And his habits corresponded with his work. Absorbed with the grand object before him, he was coarse in his apparel, abstemious in his food; he despised all the amenities of life, and shared in his character, the congenial sternness of the mountain and desert.

"The Son of Man came eating and drinking." Jesus mingled in society. His first miracle was performed to contribute to the innocent festivities of a marriage; and in all his life he sympathized with the joys as well as the sorrows of humanity. At an early stage of his ministry the disciples of John had captiously noticed this difference. "Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?"

Moreover, some of John's disciples had forsaken him and followed Jesus; and the adherents of a party are always very reluctant to acknowledge the merits of a leader

who is drawing recruits from their ranks. These desertions, too, had been caused by John's glowing eulogiums upon Jesus. But, while their Master thus generously exalted him whom they regarded with envy as a successful rival, that rival had not as yet uttered a single word in commendation of John. This jealousy of the new teacher betrayed itself in that somewhat querulous observation: "And they came to John and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom *thou barest witness*, behold the same baptizeth, and all men come to him."

Above all, John was now imprisoned. This noble intrepid herald had been for some time languishing in a dungeon. Could he be the Messiah, who, possessing the power to work miracles and to rescue their leader, was thus indifferent to the fate of so devoted and loyal a champion?

Nothing could be more natural than that John's disciples should be prejudiced, sceptical, slow to confer upon Jesus that magnificent title, compared with which the pomp of princes, the diadem of earthly monarchs faded into contempt.

But there is one reason why I cannot adopt the opinion of those who attribute John's message to the doubts of his followers;—a reason which, with me, is always conclusive in reading the Sacred Books. The plain language of the narrative forbids this interpretation. The enquiry clearly proceeds from John himself, for himself. "John Baptist has sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" And the Saviour's answer is sent back directly to John." "Go your way, and tell John." Besides, John's disciples knew that Jesus had wrought miracles; if they still doubted, and in spite of John's assurances, why should other miracles convince them? In a word, either Jesus supposed—as he manifestly did—that some unbelief had entered the mind of the Baptist, (and if he thought this possible, why should not we?—or in the entire transaction—in his language as well as in that of John—there is a want of frankness, there is an air of collusion and

contrivance wholly unnecessary, and which cannot be even intimated without some irreverence. *

To those who are willing to receive the Scriptures no testimony can be more explicit than this. Indeed the last words in the answer returned—"Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me," clearly convey a reproof to the Baptist. And if any further evidence be needed to prove that the doubt is to be ascribed to John himself, we will find it in the language which Jesus uttered as soon as the messengers had departed. For, although he pronounced the noblest panegyric upon the imprisoned martyr, he yet pointedly notices a disadvantage under which he labored, as an apology for his being deficient in that strong faith and full assurance which would be the privilege of all, even the least, in the maturity of the Gospel dispensation. "Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding, he *that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.*"

Rejecting, therefore, as unnatural, and wholly unwarrantable, the common interpretation of our text; regarding it as far-fetched, as doing violence to the inspired record, as imputing to John and to Jesus an indiscretion wholly unworthy and uncalled for; seeing in it simply a shift to get rid of a seeming difficulty;—the only other explanation of the passage deserving our attention, is that which traces the message to some doubts and misgivings in the mind of John himself. But, now, can this hypothesis be justified?

Of course, there is an objection to this view which at first appears almost insuperable, otherwise, the mass of commentators would not have discarded it; and this objection is found in the fact, that, of all then living in Judea, John was precisely the person who most certainly knew the character and mission of the Redeemer.

* Olshausen well says, that this interpretation "has absolutely no weight; for the disciples of the Baptist would have been completely satisfied by the decided declaration of their master, as we see in the case of the Apostles. John i: 37."

Recollect his address when Jesus came to him for baptism; "John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" After the baptism, he saw "the Spirit descending and remaining upon him;" and he had been divinely admonished, that this sign would designate the illustrious personage who should "baptize with the Holy Ghost." In short, his clear and repeated attestations, "Behold the Lamb of God!" "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!" As you recall these facts, you are ready to dismiss forever a solution which supposes that any incredulity could have arisen in the mind of one so thoroughly enlightened. But do not decide thus hastily. Pause before you thus renounce, the plain import of the sacred narrative. I have stated the common arguments in the strongest terms. A little reflection will I think convince you, however, that they are not at all conclusive, and that the interpretation now before us commends itself to our judgment and is moreover full of instruction.

For, is it quite certain that, before his imprisonment, John had ever been fully and personally acquainted with Christ as the true Messiah? His profoundly reverent and self-abasing address when Jesus approached for baptism we have already quoted; and had John not confessed his ignorance, we would have been positive that this implied a full recognition of the Being who stood before him. He, himself, however, informs us that he then knew him not; "And I knew him not, but that he should be made manifest in Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water." Whether John, living in the desert, had ever seen Jesus before, we are not informed; but he was at once deeply impressed by his majestic presence. No sooner did that form enter the wave, and those calm heavenly eyes meet his, than a solemn awe fell upon his soul, and he shrank from administering to him a rite intended for sinners; yet he did not discover in him the glorious Messiah.

But after the baptism did not John receive a revelation which disclosed the character of this holy and mysterious visitant? This I concede. "And I knew him not,

but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining upon him, the same is he which shall baptize with the Holy Ghost." Nor, thus divinely illuminated, and hearing the voice from heaven, which I suppose was audible to all, could John for a moment doubt the surpassing dignity of him who ascended from the waters. And knowing that the Messiah had come, he testified that this was he. "I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God."

"No man," however, "can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." That Holy Spirit whose office it is to "glorify" Jesus was not yet fully come. In close connection with the passage in hand is the context, which reminds us of the inferior light possessed by John. And even after such a sensible, miraculous phenomenon, it is still possible that his spiritual conceptions were less clear and permanent than we would infer from the facts. I am not unmindful of those announcements in which he pointed to "the Lamb of God" but he was then plainly under inspiration. The prophetical office long suspended had been revived in him; and we know that prophets were often the vehicles of revelations which they did not fully comprehend. "They searched what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow."

But, admit the common opinion, that Jesus was at first known to John with certainty as the Messiah; this knowledge was, of course, inward, spiritual, a matter of faith; and in the holiest this light may suffer a sad eclipse. Twice only did Jesus express his admiration at the greatness of faith; and it is remarkable that in each case—the woman of Canaan, and the Roman centurion—it was the faith of a Gentile. Among his own disciples we find many mournful instances of a faith, once most triumphant, utterly overborne in dark and trying hours. The Apostles knew Jesus as John could not know him, yet Thomas and Peter yielded to unbelief; and this after the enthusiastic loyalty in the former who exclaimed, "Let us go that we may die with him;"

and after that direct revelation to the latter, for which the Saviour pronounced him "blessed." Indeed they all forsook him and surrendered their hope, giving way to despondency, and repeating those words of bitter disappointment, "We trusted that it had been he." You, yourselves, my dear hearers, are you never staggered and tempted to unbelief? And if, with all the superior light and advantages enjoyed by us, the Tempter can shake our souls, is it strange that John's spiritual vision should be darkened, and gloomy doubts cast a transient cloud over his spirit?

As the Redeemer walked before him rapt in profound contemplation of his sublime and awful enterprise, the spirit of prophecy breathed his inspirations into the soul of the appointed harbinger; and he "spake as moved by the Holy Ghost;"—pointing the multitudes, and his own disciples, to the Lamb of God. But, as a man, John's spiritual apprehension of the Saviour resembled that of all in whom it now pleases God "to reveal his Son;" and his faith was liable to the same obscuration.

Even though there had been, at this time, nothing to expose the Baptist in a peculiar manner to the suggestions of unbelief, our own experience would readily account for any alternations of darkness and light in his inward life. These sad moments when the firmest convictions are shaken constitute a part of that discipline through which the soul is cast in utter helplessness upon Jesus and faith itself is corroborated. Dr. Payson tells us, he sometimes went into the pulpit doubting the existence of God, yet crying to God to deliver him from this blasphemy. Amidst his gloomy fears John's faith is still triumphant, for he applies at once and only to Jesus. He turns to him in the very spirit which exclaims, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.' But that he was perplexed and distressed, there can be no question; nor is it at all difficult to see why doubts would naturally arise in his mind." Honor me with your attention while I give my reasons for this assertion.

And, first, let me remind you, that John had now been some time in his gloomy dungeon at Machaerus. The Evangelist notices this fact; "Now when John had heard

in prison the works of Jesus;" and does not this go far to account for the darkness which came over his soul? In natures seemingly the most rugged, there is often a fund of the keenest sensibility. Our prophet was evidently a man of this sort; and now, deserted by some of his most devoted friends, imprisoned for his faithfulness, his career prematurely cut off,—can we be surprised, if the melancholy thought crept into his heart, that perhaps his faith had been an illusion? We are prone to regard the characters mentioned in the Bible too much as historical abstractions, and we thus lose much of the benefit we ought to derive from them. Contemplate John as a man of like passions with yourselves, and you already begin to comprehend his feelings.

Pent up there within cold, clammy walls, this wild lion of a man is, for a while, broken in the elasticity of his confidence; and why should not this be? In matters of religious experience we must never overlook this curiously wrought material frame, this net-work of nerves and fibres in which the soul resides. When, after his long journey, Elijah sits down under a juniper tree and wishes to die, God's first act in reviving the spirit of his disconsolate servant, is to supply him with food to nourish his body. Much of what we call spiritual depression may be traced to physical causes. Every pastor has known painful cases, in which those whose piety was above suspicion were ready to give up their hope, to plunge into despair. Nor, for this sad malady is there any remedy in sermons and meditations. It craves fresh air, exercise, wholesome diet, and change of scene. And is it strange, if, after pining in that dreary jail, the assurance of even such a man as John should for a moment break down? O, it was a free, earnest, stirring life he had lived and loved. No sybarite was he; no carpet apostle clothed in silk and lawn; no velvet preacher lisping droning soft things to sleepy audiences reposing upon cushions of satin and down. His voice shook men's consciences, roused the most heedless, alarmed the boldest, humbled the proudest; and as a *man*—a true, earnest man—will ever be heard by men, multitudes

crowded eagerly to hear him, hanging in breathless reverence upon his lips.

All this has now ceased. His eagle spirit is no longer invigorated by the bracing mountain breezes; his pulses no more bound, his heart no more burns within him, as they used to do when he traversed the solemn depths of the forest, and clomb the blue hills of Judea; his soul no longer glows at the spectacle of listening throngs melted into penitence by his sacred eloquence. Arrested, immured, curbed in his warmest aspirations, his work seemingly a failure; shut out just as he had reached the maturity of years and usefulness, from the common air and from human sympathy, shut up in a damp chilling cell, the strong hour conquers him, he yields to momentary despondency, sorrow begins to dislimn the visions of his faith, and to quell all the passionate energy which lay in him. If he be truly the Messiah why is this permitted? Would the glorious deliverer of Israel be satisfied with cautious and gentle measures, and leave his herald thus to languish in the power of a tyrant?

Brethren, he knows nothing of man psychologically, who does not perceive that, in some unhappy moment of deep dejection, John's faith might commence to fail. Sad it is, but not the less certain, that simple loving confiding hearts, after experiencing the perfidy so common in the world, begin at length to find their lives embittered by almost universal distrust. Cold hearts, in which consistency and constancy are no virtues, do not comprehend this; but warm trusting souls know what I say to be true; and when such enthusiastic natures are baffled, and see their hopes all cruelly frustrated, they are strongly tempted to lose faith in every thing and every body.

But the depressing influence of the dungeon was not the only cause which would naturally weaken the confidence of the man of God. His imprisonment removed him from his work; and without true, clear, decided activity for Christ, no one can be always strong in faith. Work, Christian, work, for the time to work is short; "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wis-

dom in the grave whither thou goest." Work, Christian, work, for though life be spared, you know not how soon you may be disabled for work. Diseases are thick around you; perhaps some insidious malady has already invaded your system, or at any moment one of a thousand accidents may cripple your strength. Work, Christian, work, for all around you is work to be done for Jesus and a perishing world, "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." Work, Christian, work; now it is "well doing," soon it will be "well done;" yonder He stands holding your crown in his hands, and all your toils and sacrifices are weaving fresh stars into that crown; nor, (and I speak without extravagance, I utter only what the Scriptures justify) nor would I barter the lightest coronet which shall encircle the brow of the humblest sinner ransomed by blood, who has devoted his life to Jesus, for the massiest diadem which coruscates upon the brow of an archangel. Work, Christian, work; all things are passing away; time is passing, youth is passing, health is passing, opportunity is passing; work, true work for God alone remains forever.

These and other reasons urge us to be "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord;" but if all these motives were wanting, this truth ought to make us unwearied in our diligence—that without work faith will become a cold, dull, lifeless, ineffectual thing. There is no casuist like an earnest spirit clearly and triumphantly at work. Shew me a man thoroughly engaged in the service of Jesus, and I will show you a man who has no time, who feels no temptation to doubt. We are to pray for faith; but it is folly to rest there, and expect it to come to us passively from without. Assurance, like true happiness, can be reached and nourished only by real determined activity in the sphere assigned us by God.

In the ministry of the Baptist we have a noble illustration of the power of faith, while a Christian is steadily toiling for God. John is first introduced to us as a popular, flaming, indefatigable evangelist. In this field of labor, his whole soul is absorbed by his work; and with

what zeal, with what rugged energy, with what elevation above all the weaknesses and passions of humanity, with what self-immolating devotion, did he execute his mission. As his fame increased, his sphere of usefulness was enlarged. At length he became a court preacher; royalty began to patronize him, and he was thus exposed to snares far more perilous than any which could have assailed the wild child of nature, the rude prophet of the wilderness. "Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just and a holy man and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly." Amidst hatred and persecution a true soul is armed with courage and strength. It is when the world smiles, especially when the blandishments of princes beguile the heart; above all, when he is caressed—not for worldly compliance, but because he is "a just and holy man," and the most insidious of all self-complacencies is thus flattered—it is then that we tremble for the servant of God. John, however, was as superior to the seductions of the city and palace as he had been to the hardships of the desert. "They that are in kings' houses wear soft clothing," said Jesus; but no effeminacy could reach this incorruptible herald, though he was in royal pavilions. Amidst voluptuous halls, basking under regal patronage, his fidelity to duty swerved not. He scorned the cringing obsequiousness of the fawning sycophants and parasites around him, and with majestic simplicity and sincerity he rebuked the monarch for his adultery.

His occupation is now gone, and in that lonely cell what can this grand reformer do? A true soul cannot bear idleness; and here was a true soul, all glowing with the sublimest ardors, suddenly, violently torn from the work he loved, and flung there,—his bright eye to grow dim, his great heart to moulder and languish in a dungeon. No wonder he becomes dark and morbid, a prey to gloomy doubts and suspicions. A Christian actively engaged for Jesus will never complain of unbelief. His doubts, like the nightmare, will be gone, the moment he bestirs himself in real earnest. There is an evidence beyond all argument which is wrought in us by clear, self-sacrificing loyalty to the Redeemer. A soul thus con-

centrated is informed with light and fire from above; onward it moves, "trailing clouds of glory," heaven all about it and within it. "If any man will do, he shall know." But if he will not do, he shall not know. Let a Christian, like Elijah, abandon his work; nay, though it seems hard, let him, like John, be compelled to leave his work, and what follows? His past experience, his strength acquired by the long struggle will sustain him, you are ready to say. But it may be far otherwise. God has linked faith and works together and we cannot separate them. In the moral economy under which we live, it is only when acted out, that truth can sustain us. Truth known but lying dormant in the mind is dead truth; and like a dead substance in the body, will produce disease if not mortification.

Those who observe their own inner life will find no difficulty in explaining the transient depression and incredulity which overtook the Baptist, if they reflect upon the two causes already indicated—his confinement in a clammy dungeon producing an inward imprisonment, gloom, darkness; and his want of occupation. I will now add one other thought—which of itself might well explain the misgivings of John, and which, combined with those just mentioned, puts us in possession of the whole secret of his doubts and perplexities.

The most cursory study of Jewish history will shew that this people differed from all ancient nations chiefly in the fact, that religion was the very life and soul of their existence, and that a sense of sin in all its blackness was constantly impressed upon their consciences. The consequence was that, at first, they looked for a Messiah who was to be a divine deliverer from this dreadful curse. Long, however, before the period with which our narration has to do, this high aspiration had almost ceased. Bowed, successively, under the Persian, the Syrian, the Idumean and Roman yokes, the Jews had degenerated from the glorious hope once proclaimed by their prophets, and they now yearned only for a magnificent political Saviour.

Among this people Jesus appeared, and asserted his claims as the Messiah. At first John hailed him as the

promised deliverer of Israel; and, prophetically, as we have seen, he announced him as the great atoning sacrifice. But public opinion is a flood which carries along the wisest and strongest; nor is it to be questioned, that, though possessing superior illumination, the Baptist still shared in the popular faith as to the Messiah's temporal majesty. The Jews clung to this belief with such energy of patriotism, that we find the Apostles, after a long intimacy with Jesus, cherishing their earthly ambition. Nay, even after his resurrection, they ask, "Lord wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?" It is certain, that the ardent noble heart of the Baptist sympathized with the high and fond hopes of his nation; but how entirely had Jesus disappointed all these hopes. "Now, when John had heard in prison the works of Christ." He is languishing in prison, and sadness, solitude, disappointment, have well nigh crushed his imperial spirit. In his desolate cell he hears of the works of Christ. But what works? Those which had been anticipated? armies collected? victories achieved? the glory of Israel vindicated? the undisputed pre-eminence of the chosen race asserted? a throne? a regal sceptre? an august supremacy established? Nothing of all this. Healing a few sick, feeding a hungry mob, gathering a crowd of admiring followers to listen to his doctrine. And is this all? Are these the magnificent exploits of the mighty Shiloh? Was it for this that patriarchs and prophets and kings longed to see his day? and that Jehovah had heralded him with such pomp as the splendid emancipator of Israel, the monarch who should wield his sceptre from Jerusalem over the whole earth?

Enter into their thoughts, unite them, and you will not be surprised that John became intolerant of suspense; that expectations sensitively jealous for the national glory should begin to fail. Nothing can be more natural than that a dark, gloomy, and perhaps somewhat impatient uncertainty should brood for a while over the soul of the Baptist, that his faith should be staggered, and ominous conjectures perplex and distract his mind.

II. "Now when John had heard in prison the works

of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" We have examined the message which certainly proceeded from some painful questionings in the mind of John himself. From the message let us turn to the answer; let us see how Jesus dealt with this case of a staggered and almost expiring faith.

To the enquiry proposed, a human teacher would have simply replied affirmatively. Jesus well knew, however, that such was not the answer which the unhappy state of John's mind demanded. To the Samaritan woman he said, "I that speak unto thee am he;" but the incredulity of the Baptist was not thus to be treated. Indeed it is never by words but by works, that men's doubts as to our characters and claims are to be removed. "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him." And there is another remarkable passage in which—alluding to John's testimony—*Jesus seems to intimate some possible deficiency even in him as a witness;* and refers to his own works as the real credentials of his Messiahship: "Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness to the truth, but I receive not testimony from man; I have a greater witness than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me."

Moreover, it was by his deeds that prophecy declared the Messiah should be known. Hence the answer which Jesus returns;—not words, but mighty deeds. An answer which John would at once comprehend; which would forever dispel his apprehensions; on receiving which his consolation, his joy, his triumph were full, for he knew that all was well. After this assurance he could cheerfully lay his head upon the block, satisfied that his work, though brief, was done; and—even while the executioner was binding him and the cruel steel was cleaving the air, he could exult in the full confidence that—in hastening to mingle with kindred spirits around the throne—he left One upon earth whose great enter-

prise no tyrant could arrest, whose empire should be boundless and eternal.

Glancing at the Saviour's answer, observe, first, that he says nothing about his Messiahship, but refers directly to credentials which were conclusive. "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true; there is another that beareth witness of me;"—that is, my testimony is liable to suspicion; you may say, "Thou bearest witness of thyself;" but the authority of my Father in heaven cannot be disputed. John may require that authority, and he shall have it. "And in the same hour he cured many of their infirmities, and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, go your way and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."

Another thing in this remarkable answer. The credentials which Jesus exhibited were precisely those which prophecy had foretold. The title "He that should come," is often applied to the Messiah by the sacred writers. "Behold your God will come." "He will come and save you." In the question, "Art thou he that should come?" John, of course, alluded to these predictions. And when we examine these prophecies, we find Isaiah declaring that this glorious personage should vindicate his title by the very miracles which were now wrought. "He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing."

But the most convincing and instructive part of this answer is that which least strikes us at this day. The reply is cumulative. First there is the healing of diseases; then raising the dead; but the last and crowning proof of his Messiahship is, the preaching of the Gospel to the poor. This had been predicted, as the peculiar glory of Shiloh. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good

tidings unto the meek." Such is the prophecy, and it was exactly fulfilled; for the Hebrew term rendered, "*meek,*" is translated, in the Septuagint which Jesus often quoted, by a Greek word signifying "*the poor*"—the very word, indeed, which is employed in our text. Others had taught great truths, and performed illustrious miracles; but hitherto the poor had been overlooked. Jesus first proclaimed the grandeur of the soul, and the common fatherhood of God;—revelations these which pour contempt upon all artificial and superficial distinctions;—investing the humblest and most despised child of earth with transcendent honor; and unfolding to the poorest, spiritual and imperishable riches.

"The poor have the Gospel preached unto them;"—this was a sign which John could not misunderstand, but, the full glory of which none of us begin to comprehend. To recognize the sacred rights of humanity, to "honor all men," as men and because they are men, this is an elevation of which earthly wisdom and benevolence had hitherto formed no sort of conception. Jesus was the first philanthropist. He first breathed into man a love for man, as man, a love for the poor, a love which penetrates through the rags of penury, and honors the soul as of more value than the whole material creation. This love was unknown before upon this fallen earth; Jesus brought it with him from heaven. Now and then, some man,—perhaps some simple unlettered man—touched by this love—hath spoken, and all hearts have at once confessed the strange mysterious influence of his words. But none of us can conceive the power which this principle is yet to exert, the revolutions which it will some day achieve, when it shall have bestowed upon our churches the real gift of tongues—the true miraculous endowment which descended in flames upon the apostles; not the faculty of speaking in foreign unknown accents, but the more glorious power of reaching the heart of humanity, everywhere, with a language vernacular to the whole brotherhood of man. Miracles attested the divine mission of the Redeemer; but miracles are poor compared with that celestial love which, through clouds of human guilt and wretchedness, sees the dignity of the soul, and, by toil and sacrifice, seeks to regenerate and save it.

In conclusion let this subject teach us, that temptations to doubt and unbelief are no evidence of a want of genuine piety. John "was a burning and a shining light"—one of the most illustrious heroes and martyrs who ever adorned the sacred annals; yet in a gloomy moment his faith was at fault; and he began to fear that his dearest hopes, his once buoyant and triumphant confidence, might all be a deception. The heartless, the masses engrossed with earthly cares—know nothing of these strange caprices of feeling which come over those who love and live earnest, enthusiastic lives. Nervous, passionate natures are, in dark moments, pressed by mysterious apprehensions under which the soul gives way drifts from its firm moorings, and tends to universal scepticism. The truest earthly friendship, the sincerest earthly love, even the faith which is dearer than life, and which,—like John in this sad hour—still turns to Christ for succor,—all, all———the thought enters the mind, whether all may not be the delusion of a fond, confiding temperament which has believed because it wished to believe.

See, too, where a true soul will go in seasons of darkness and despondency. See how much faith there is in the doubts of an earnest heart. John sends at once and directly to Jesus;—a lesson his disciples learned from him; for when he was beheaded, they "took up the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus." Sensitive natures find themselves depressed and disheartened; they do not know what to do with their burden; they turn to themselves, to their past experience, or their present faithfulness; but they can derive no real consolation from these sources. Not only at first, but as often as he was stricken, the Israelite had to look directly to the Brazen Serpent; and the oppressed spirit must repair at all times and at once to the Redeemer. "Look unto me, and be ye saved." "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Christians, lose what you may of comfort and peace, hold fast your confidence in Jesus. With that you can look anything in the face; with that, desperation itself will cease to be desperate.

A third lesson. True greatness does not depend on

what the world calls success. In difficult enterprises pioneers generally seem to fail, but they really secure the triumphs of those who succeed them. John's course was as brief as it was bright. He died when he was only thirty years of age, and his end was tragical; but he did not die, until he had "fulfilled his course." His was a life not of words, but of deeds. He was sent to prepare a guilty world for the reception of the Messiah. Arduous as was his office, he concentrated his whole being upon its discharge; and died rather than be recreant to duty. This was success, this was his glory; and rest assured there is for you and me no other success, no honor, no happiness but in occupying faithfully the sphere assigned us, in devoting our lives to the duties of that station in which the divine wisdom and love have placed us. Our great business, our true life is, not to be prying into what lies dimly in the distance, but to do what lies clearly before us. Conforming ourselves to the will of God, let us never be discouraged or diverted because we cannot comprehend the conduct of him whom we serve. In the verse just succeeding our text Jesus warns us, that there may be much in what he does to perplex and try our faith; but he says, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." To trust is better, nobler, happier than to reason. To love and worship Jesus, to confide all into his hands,—this is the religion of the Gospel,—this is duty and strength and victory.

Above all, let us learn the surpassing dignity of the Christian ministry. Jesus declared that the preaching of the Gospel to the poor and the perishing was the crowning proof of his divine mission, the great crowning glory of his kingdom. Let us rejoice in this Gospel.—Happy are our eyes which see the heavenly light, and our ears which hear the joyful sound. Miracles blessed only the body; the Gospel blesses the soul. Miracles have ceased; but the Gospel is still pouring light and purity and truth and joy over the earth. Miracles are the power of God to heal the sick, to give sight to the blind, to raise the dead; the Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation"—infusing spiritual health, opening the eyes to rejoice in celestial truth, raising the immortal spirit from

the death of sin and corruption to everlasting life—to an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Christians, my dearly beloved brethren, what a priceless treasure is this Gospel to us. What a precious Redeemer does it disclose. "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" O, it is he. It is he whom our souls love and adore. We look for no other. We desire no other, no other Friend, High Priest, Advocate, Redeemer. To whom can we go but unto him? to whom, for pardon, for sanctification, for comfort, for strength in temptation, for grace in trial, for light in darkness, for peace in tribulation, for heavenly support when flesh and heart shall be failing, for victory over death, for triumphant assurance at the judgment? "Lord to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe, and are sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Whatever you may say, some of you, my friends, are plainly looking for another. You deny this; but your conduct, your secret hopes from your virtues, your pleas of unworthiness—all prove it. You are not willing to receive Jesus as the Christ, and to cast yourselves entirely upon his great atonement. If you persist in this unbelief, you must perish. For me, for you, there is no other hope, "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby ye must be saved."

Blessed, forever blessed is he, who shall not be offended in Jesus. What peace and joy does he not find in obedience. What a crown of glory is reserved for him in heaven. But you who neglect the Saviour, remember you, too, are fulfilling a course, and what must be the end of that course if you persevere in it? Recollect that, to perish, you need not openly reject the Gospel; you have only to continue to "neglect" it. Jesus is an almighty Saviour, "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him; but if you refuse to come, his almightiness will avail you nothing.

Jesus is a willing Saviour. "Him that cometh unto me," he says, "I will in no wise cast out;" but remember you may die to-night, and if you pass as you now are

into eternity, the great gulf will be fixed, so that you can never come to him. Jesus is a patient Saviour. "How often"—(such has long been his weeping complaint as, by mercy, by affliction, by his word, by the secret movements of his Spirit, he has sought to draw you to himself)—"how often would I have gathered thee under my wings, but thou wouldst not." Remember that this patience, though it last long, will not last forever. At any hour the sentence may go forth, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." This night Jesus may say, "I go away, and ye shall seek me and shall die in your sins." "*Die in your sins*,"—the second death, the soul's death, what a doom. An immortality of pain and tears; an infinity of wretchedness and despair; the blackness of darkness across which conscience will forever shoot her clear and ghastly flashes, like lightning streaming over a desert when midnight and tempest are there; weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth; long, long eternity, and things that will make eternity seem longer,—making each moment seem an eternity,—oh, miserable condition of the damned! What a doom this for you. What a doom for one who was warned, urged, entreated to be saved. My dear friend, or ever it be too late, open your eyes to your danger and your duty. "Then I saw," says Bunyan, "that there was a way to hell even from the very gate of heaven; and I awoke, and lo, it was a dream." Beware lest you precipitate yourself into such a doom, and awake and find it no dream, but a terrible reality; a reality rendered the more intolerable by the memory of all the love and mercy which sought to save you, but which you resolutely, wilfully, wantonly resisted.

Sermon Eleventh.

JOY IN THE LORD.

"ALTHOUGH the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."—HABAKKUK iii: 17, 18.

I SUBMIT to yourselves whether you ought to be satisfied with a religion which affords you no enjoyment. I appeal to the law of Christ's kingdom, "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, Rejoice;"—no command can be more explicit. I lay before you the experience of God's people in all ages;—"the joy of salvation," "the joy unspeakable and full of glory," which delighted their souls, causing them to "rejoice in tribulation," that is, to find a source of happiness in tribulation itself. I open to you the legacy of the Redeemer:—"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." In a word, I ask you to consider, that in its very nature, piety, if it be one part duty, is two parts happiness; "The kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."—Unite these reflections. Can you rest in a religion which gives you no joy?—nay, which, so far from being your consolation in trouble, is itself the source of your greatest trouble; from which you hasten to escape and find pleasure in the world, until your fears or the voice of conscience drives you back again?

The word happiness does not apply to brutes; but humanity—though stunned by the Fall—still retains some dim consciousness of the bliss it has forfeited, and, therefore, pines constantly for a felicity not to be found in

this world. Religion alone satisfies these universal and infinite cravings. Your pastors are to "be helpers of your joy." And if, instead of wasting life in pursuits out of yourselves, you would second our wishes, and—entering into your own hearts—would let Jesus correct the disorders there, and establish his throne over all your passions, you would know by experience that, even here, in its pathway to immortality, the Gospel scatters blessings which can banish all our fears, can fill us with joy and peace in believing, can elevate us into a noble superiority to sensible gratifications, can cause us to be absorbed in God our "exceeding joy," and to feel that the loss of the whole world would only make room for him and for the pure heavenly delight which is found in him.

I. In unfolding our text, let us first speak of the joy here mentioned. This chapter is styled a lyrical prayer or meditation. It is full of epic fire and sublimity. Sadness, fear, confidence alternately shake and calm the prophet's soul; but all his emotions at last subside, or, rather, rise and expand into the noblest and divinest joy.

Now, as to this joy you feel at once that, in its origin and nature, it is high above the world. For it is perfect satisfaction in God;—not in his gifts, not even in the spiritual gifts and blessings he bestows;—but in himself. And it abides when all earthly prospects are withered; it consoles and cheers when every source of mortal happiness has shrunk and perished. It is when his heart is overwhelmed within him, that the child of God is led to a Rock higher than he is—higher than his fears and sins and sorrows—higher than all the billows and storms and darkness around him.

There are natural enjoyments common to all—to the enemies as well as the friends of God. There are sensual gratifications, "the pleasures of sin for a season." And there are in religion excitements and fervors of the passions—airy castles of happiness which, like the rainbow, depend on the state of the atmosphere. But heaven is not more superior to earth than is the joy in our text to all these transient feverish delights, which impart no abiding, sustaining happiness, which indeed leave the

heart more weak, exhausted, weary and void than it was before. The joy of the Lord is calm, intelligent, pure, spiritual, invigorating, celestial happiness. It is not natural, but the fruit of the Spirit. It is the bliss of angels —the deep speechless rapture of cherub and seraph upon whom God directly pours a flood of love and blessedness; but to us it is vouchsafed only through the atonement of Jesus. It is the perfect satisfaction of all our immortal appetites at the "bright fountain of goodness." It is the repose of the soul which rises above the scope and verge of sublunary things and loses itself in that Being who is the essential happiness, whose perfections are the exhaustless treasure-house of glory and ecstacy to all holy intelligences, and who is to us, far more than to angel and archangel, the object of boundless gratitude, love, worship, since we rejoice in him as "the God of our salvation."

I have just said that this joy can be ours only through the atonement. It is "rejoicing in the Lord;" and we know that it is in Jesus the Christian rejoices "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." The distinguishing characteristics of the renewed soul are that it "worships God in the Spirit, rejoices in Jesus Christ, and has no confidence in the flesh." Indeed the text expressly declares that the emotion which thus exalts above all sorrow and calamity is "joy in the God of our salvation." The first donation and every accession of this heavenly treasure come to us by personal union with our Redeemer.— The soul of our prophet is absorbed in the contemplation not of abstract attributes, but of a Person. And this is a striking and important trait in the religion of Jesus, that he himself is "all and in all." Faith, love, hope, joy, all the graces and duties of the Christian's life, all the triumphs of the Christian's death, all the glories of the Christian's heaven have reference to him.

If, then, I were required to give a general definition of the joy in our text, I would say, that it is the gratitude, peace, confidence, solid reality of happiness experienced by a soul which reposes wholly in Jesus. For the more simple and entire our trust in him, the more will we rejoice in God—in his will, character, blessedness, glory.

Many of God's dearest children walk in sadness all their lives, lamenting, not for any known sin, but that they taste so little joy. And this is because they look not directly and steadily to Jesus, but take counsel in their own souls, looking to their own experiences for assurance, and thus "have sorrow in their hearts daily." "Oh," exclaims Congar, "had I learned this secret earlier of looking always to Jesus how much more I should have enjoyed these fourscore years; how much happier I might have been as a Christian all my days. I have found it to be only union with Christ by faith, and a constant recollection of him as a present Saviour, that can keep the soul happy by keeping it from sin."

True spiritual joy is, then, the fruit of faith in Jesus; a faith which is always accompanied by a tender remembrance of sin, by inward renovation, and by a filial surrender of the will to God. But this is too vague. Many of you, all of you, I hope, would wish me to be more particular—to go into an analysis of this sublime sentiment—to search for the ingredients of this noble pleasure. Nor need we go far to find them. They are the knowledge of God, love for God, and harmony with God; three elements of spiritual happiness which, in their perfection, will be heaven, which, even now, are heaven; and to surrender which for any earthly enjoyment is an infatuation far surpassing that of the idiot who should exchange a legacy of millions for poverty and rags.

The *knowledge* of God—of God revealed, seen, felt in Jesus—this is the first source of satisfying joy. My friends, let us understan dourselves. Our highest, noblest connection is not with the earth. Let us bless God for faculties by which we can explore the wonders and enjoy the beauties of creation; for powers which can subdue the earth, the sea, the elements, can subsidize all the materials of nature, and compel all her forces into alliance with our progress and welfare. But could we achieve "all knowledge" of all visible worlds, it would only mock the profoundest want of minds which are from God and can be satisfied only with the knowledge of God. Great is the human intellect: greater than stars, moon, sun; for these radiant spheres, while they shine and burn

along their glorious circles, and hymn God's praises in sweetest melody,—are all unconscious of their beauty, and hear not their own music; but the mind can expatiate among these flaming orbs, can exult in their brightness, and take in all their ravishing harmonies. Greater, however, far greater is that intellect, because it can ascend to the Creator himself, and know him, can study and adore his character and perfections.

Nor does this knowledge secure repose and delight merely for the mind. It satisfies the heart. It elevates our affections above the earthly and mutable, and fixes them upon the heavenly and eternal. "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace." It is only this light which can shed life and peace into the soul. It is only as God is the object of our contemplation that our affections rise to their proper centre and portion. "Lord shew us the Father and it sufficeth us." It is as we know God that the soul rejoices in a portion spiritual, infinite, eternal as itself. If we seek the cause of all the restlessness and misery upon the earth, the Saviour reveals it in that weeping lamentation, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee." If we ask what judgment from God would cause man's inner life to pine and die, the answer is, "Not a famine of bread nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord." And if we enquire when this fallen earth shall be regenerated; when sin and suffering shall cease; when righteousness shall cover the hills and flow along the valleys; when purity and joy shall pour the golden atmosphere of heaven all over this globe, and waken the music of heaven in all its peopling multitudes—making every spot a temple, and every day a Sabbath, and every breath gratitude and praise; the prophet replies by pointing to that millennial noontide when "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

"Knowledge is power." If this be true of knowledges which are earthly, political, material, what shall we say of spiritual knowledge? The knowledge of God is power —power over the powerful—power where all else is powerless. Nothing can so pluck up pride and all its bitter

roots. Nothing can so calm every tumult in our bosoms. Nor is there a sinful passion, nor a rising murmur, nor a movement of discontent or envy or cupidity which is not hushed as the discoveries of this glorious Being break in softly, sweetly, all-subduingly upon the soul.

I lament that this knowledge is so imperfect. It must ever be imperfect; for so fringed and covered with splendor is the glory of God, that the gaze of angel and archangel is dazzled. But if in the "glass" given us, if in "the face of Jesus Christ" we would contemplate this glory more constantly, we would be "changed into the same image from glory to glory;" our exulting souls would exclaim, "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent;" grace and peace would be multiplied unto us through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; the full assurance of faith and hope would be ours. "Rejoice with trembling" we should; but the trembling would resemble that of those stars which quiver because they are fixed in the highest heaven. It would not be the tremulousness of alarm and agitation, but the thrilling pulsations of a joy inarticulate, unspeakable, yet so full of glory that, were all vintage and harvest of his earthly hopes withered by drought or drowned by floods—the Christian could still look up with eyes suffused but bright with gratitude and exclaim, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

The knowledge of God. From this knowledge, love for God must spring up in the soul; for "he who loveth not, knoweth not God." And this *love* is the second element in that sublime joy of which I am speaking.

Our miseries arise from our errors; and to nothing is man more blind than to his own happiness. The case in our text is sad. Our hearts sink at the very description of prospects thus darkened and dreary; and we wonder at the calm triumphant joy of the prophet in the midst of this desolation. But are we Christians?

Where is our faith, when this superiority to earthly joy seems to us so incredible? Fig trees, olives, vines, fields, flocks, herds,—is the soul then, dependant on these things? And are we yet to be cured of the folly of him who supposed that in his barns, where he had stored away food for his cattle and horses, he could also garner up goods for his soul?

Such are our ignorance and infatuation. Such is the error as to our wants which keeps us always occupied about superficial necessities, while we overlook those which are deepest and essential. And hence the mistake in all our projects of happiness;—each man adding his infallible plan to the two hundred and eighty-eight schemes proposed by the ancient philosophers;—and each man, after succeeding in his plan, confessing it to be a failure;—Solomon, who tried all plans, pronouncing "all vanity and vexation of spirit."

My friends, God is happy, because he is Love. God is supremely, absolutely happy, because he is the essential, uncreated, absolute Love. Our hearts are formed to love this God, to find all their boundless affections delighting themselves in this God. And in such a Being the heart may well find compensation for the loss of all earthly good. Loving him, and assured of his love, it must be

> "Too blest
> To mourn creation's obsequies."

Whether it rests with us to love, I will not undertake to decide. It does however, rest with us what to love; and it is the very essence of love to find happiness in its object. To give our hearts to objects unworthy of them, to make these objects indispensable to us—this is at once the great error, and sin, and misery of the world. On the other hand, to love God; to hear him say, "My son, give me thy heart," and to make this Being, this adorable Saviour, the object of our supreme affection, our portion, our wealth, all our ambition—behold the happiness of heaven; and behold a joy which is not only untroubled but increased by the wreck and decay of everything on earth.

Not only is it impossible to exhaust the whole heart

on material things, but there is no created thing which can be loved so as to be essential to our happiness without restlessness and pain. It is in loving God that the bliss and perfection of the soul begin on earth and are consummated in heaven. Pure love for God seeks no other reward than that found in loving him. And as in loving things gross and sensual, the soul is debased and made like those things, so in loving God it becomes like God in purity and felicity. The soul can be made perfect only in this love. In loving earth we become earth; in loving God we become "partakers of the divine nature."

Love to God. Nor let any one tell me that this sentiment, this delightful complacency in such a Being is something romantic and visionary. Alas for us, if we are thus ignorant. Visionary! Romantic! Would, then that we were all visionary and romantic. But no, and again, no; never was attachment more rational; and never, too, was there attachment which, by all the tests of love, more nobly vindicated its sincerity and power. Love seen in the choice of the soul; which gathers all earthly things into one aggregate and, trampling them in the dust, ascends to God—exclaiming "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Love which delights itself habitually, instinctively in the Lord; when alone, surrendering itself to the most delicious intercourse with him; and amid the tumult of business, still carrying within memories of that communion. Oh, how much dearer than all which the world can supply. Love which "thirsts for God, for the living God;" feeling that with him, wildernesses and frightful deserts would blossom as a garden, that, without him heaven itself would be only a scene of melancholy and fatiguing splendor. A love which finds its glory and happiness in God's glory and happiness. That whatever becomes of me, he is and must forever be happy—that he is and must be forever glorified—how precious are these thoughts, what light and music do they breathe into the heart. In fine, a love which expects happiness only from God; a love which can keep the mind tranquil and serene when bereft of all earthly comforts; which finds "him sweetest when the

world is bitterest;" which tastes more of his preciousness when all other precious things are withdrawn; and which shedding freshness and greenness into the soul when all outward hopes and joys are smitten and withered like grass,—causes it to exclaim with the prophet, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

The knowledge and love of God must produce *harmony* with God, and from this harmony flows the joy which I am attempting to describe.

The Christian is said to "have rejoicing in himself alone and not in another," because—his will being in sympathy with the divine will, and his heart in sympathy with the heart of God—his happiness, like that of God, is beyond the reach of all changes and alternations. No inferior exercises of religion can thus enrich the heart. Hopes, tender meltings at the first view of a crucified Saviour, are feeble and wavering; but when his soul is established and settled in unison with God, and moves in harmony with him, the Christian exclaims, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed. I will sing and give praise. Awake up my glory, awake psaltery and harp, I myself will awake early. I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people; I will sing unto thee among the nations; for thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. Be thou exalted O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth." His joy then becomes firm, immovable as the eternal throne itself.

"Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven;" in this prayer Jesus reveals the secret of all happiness. Without this concert with God, heaven could be no heaven to us; wearisome would be eternity with its "forced hallelujahs." But this concord established, heaven is already ours. We shall be no longer at the sport and mercy of events; we will view all vicissitudes with a tranquil eye, because there is harmony between the divine mind and our minds. We shall no more be over-

whelmed by afflictions; under the most crushing blows the same rod which smites will infuse balm into the wound; celestial comforts will delight our souls; because our chastisements are designed to make us partakers of the divine holiness, and there is harmony between the perfection of God and our desires after perfection. Lastly, God, as I have said, is happy in himself. The whole creation—the beauty of the earth, the grandeur of the ocean, the visible music and glory of the heavens, the sun, the moon, the stars, men, angels, archangels—adds, can add nothing to his infinite beatitude. Nor could the extinction of the whole universe—of the earth, the sea, the sky, of sun, moon, stars—of men and angels and archangels—deduct anything from it. And as there is harmony between him and our souls we shall share in this happiness; there will be harmony between his felicity and ours. Our joy will be derived from the same sources—from his perfections, his works, his providence, his government, his sovereignty, above all from the amazing scheme of redemption. As God is his own happiness; so we—yet not we, but Christ dwelling in us—shall be our happiness. Nor in the darkest hour will anything be able to damp a blessedness which is so high above the earth, so full of heaven. Still, amidst all outward dearth and ruin, the Christian will feel that "the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;" he will repose with delight in a covenant God. "How precious also"—(such will be his adoring reflections)—"how precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God, how great is the sum of them; if I should count them they are more in number than the sand. When I awake, I am still with thee;" "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate upon thee in the night watches;" "Thy statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage;" "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning;" "The Lord will command his loving kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life;" "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labor of the olive

shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

II. I have dwelt longer than I intended upon our first article. I confess that I know too little of this rejoicing; yet the theme is delightful to me. Having defined this joy, I wish now to say a word or two as to its importance. And surely this topic ought to require no other argument than that which the text presents.

The imagery here is, of course, oriental; and it is a picture of unmitigated famine and desolation. The failure of blossom and fruit on fig tree, vine and olive; these fields all sterile, parched, blackened wastes; these lowing herds and bleating folds stricken with sudden pestilence, filling the air with their groans, and strewing the earth with their ruins;—amidst such soul-rending spectacles the heart, left to itself, must sicken, must sink into gloom and despondency. But the prophet anticipates these ravages without consternation or dread. His life, his truest, highest life is in God; it is nourished and built up, not by bread, but by faith, by love, by the direct communications which Jesus imparts to the soul as the vine infuses its own life into the branches. As I before said, it is because our faith deserves not the name, that the joy seems strange and wonderful to us. For all which drought or plague can destroy is material and perishing, but the soul is spiritual and immortal.

If, as Creator, God clothes the grass of the field and satisfies the wants of every living thing, shall he not, as a Father, much rather breathe life and strength and joy into the soul? He manifests himself gloriously to the world; but he manifests himself to those who love him as he does not to the world. Intimately present to the created spirit, he can instil—he does instil peace, consolation, ineffable blessedness, a joy which gives "songs in the night," which can make life one anthem; can cheer and delight the soul amid universal disaster and dismay; which will be perfected and perpetuated when the whole material world shall have perished. The imagery in our

text is oriental, but there is nothing oriental in the great truths it teaches. Public calamities and distresses are not confined to the East, nor to the fields. Cities, nations are sometimes swept and scourged by war, pestilence, famine, commercial panic and desolation; and it is then that the Christian feels—as he did not, could not feel in prosperity—what it is to have garnered up his heart and his treasure in heaven, what it is to have his life, his joy in the God of his salvation. The language before us does not apply, however, only to public calamities. These are rare, and we are then sustained by the sympathies of those around us. We may never know such seasons, but there are sorrows we all must know. "If a man live many years and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many." "Man is born unto trouble;" it is the universal indefeasible inheritance. Afflictions must come, the furnace must be entered, waves and billows must roll over us; and then, it is only this joy in the Lord which can sustain and cheer us. Patience, resignation, submission—these are the graces generally recommended in the house of mourning, and they are noble virtues; but there is something nobler provided by the Gospel. It is joy—joy in the God of our salvation. Nor for my part, have I any language in which to speak of the divine efficacy of this sublime principle.

Can there be a darker hour than that in which David wrote the ninety-fourth Psalm? Yet, persecuted, deserted, bowed down by his own sorrows and the afflictions of Zion, we hear him exclaiming, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul."

I asked if any hour can be darker than that which then oppressed the soul of the Psalmist. There did come, however, a darker and drearier day to him. It was when he lay upon his death bed. In those moments of weakness, pain, decay, we need sympathy and support, and we turn instinctively to our family for love and consolation. But what sharp anguish pierced and rent all his soul, as the memories of his own blighted hearth and home broke in bitterly upon him; as he recalled the ingratitude and violent death of Absalom; as he mused upon the sins and miseries of his children which had brought his grey

hairs with sorrow to the grave. Yet even when thus bowed down heavily, he can still lift his fading eyes to God as his satisfying portion, and can say, "Although my house be not so with God," (not so as I had wished, not so as I had prayed, not so as I had hoped,) "yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." This last 'although' is the most touchingly mournful note in this bitter wail of sorrow. It implies that not only his house but his heart was not so with God. Upon examining his spiritual condition, he lamented so little growth, so little enlargement. His soul did not prosper and flourish, nor did sensible religious enjoyments cheer him in that trying moment. But there was that, out of himself and high above all his griefs and defects which *was* "so with God"—so firm, so immovable, that he reposes upon it with exulting confidence. The everlasting covenant could never fail. Clouds and miseries might darken all his years; the mountains might depart and the hills be removed, but the kindness of his Redeemer would not depart from him, neither should the covenant of his peace be removed.

There is one other view in which the value of religious joy cannot be too highly estimated; and I am anxious to urge it, because it is generally overlooked. From the context we find that our prophet was at first filled with fear and trembling; and that his joy in the Lord was not only a source of consolation, but inspired confidence and strength. And this is the truth I would now impress upon you.

Had I time, it would be easy to show that joy is the life of any pursuit; that the mind, sluggish and inert before, feels and obeys every noble impulse when buoyant with happiness, just as a boat which imbedded in the sand had been immovable by a cable, is drawn by the feeblest cord when afloat upon the water. It is not enough to give your child a profession; he must have a taste for it, enthusiasm in it, if he is ever to be distinguished. In the profession of arms what a difference is there between two men; one instinct with martial ardor,

his pulses thrilling, all his spirit lifted up by martial ambition, his soul kindling with the stern magnificent delights of war;* the other equally brave but discharging his duties only under a sense of obligation, and longing for the repose of peace. In literature what a difference between two scholars; one fired with lofty inspirations, glowing with thoughts which he feels "posterity will not let die;" the other toiling day and night at a weary, irksome task. I need not tell you which of these soldiers will be a hero; which of these students will achieve exalted fame in letters.

And, now, all this applies even more emphatically to the Christian, because piety—far more than any earthly pursuit—requires engagedness of heart. As I have before remarked, the economy of the Gospel is an economy of joy. Again and again we are commanded to rejoice. In short "the joy of the Lord is our strength." Without this joy we will fail to commend the religion of Jesus to others,—we will have nothing to commend; indeed, we will injure that religion; we will go mourning and cause the enemies of the Gospel to say continually to us, "Where is now your God?" Without this joy our religion will have nothing to recommend it to ourselves; it will be only a round of heartless forms and exercises. The joy of the Lord is the Christian's strength when called to make sacrifices for Christ and for truth. It is his strength in overcoming the world. He only will triumph over the pleasures of sin, who can oppose to them the greater pleasures of piety; who,—when tempted by the seductions of the passions—can ascend to God and find fullness of joy in him. In all our devotions this joy must be the life and light of the soul. The closet, the sacred pages, the sanctuary, the supper—he who rejoices in the God of his salvation experiences inexplicable peace, divine consolations, unspeakable assurances and foretastes of glory ministered to his spirit through these heaven-appointed resources.

And what shall I more say? This joy is the principle which animates the Christian in all the duties of active

*"Gaudia certaminis."—*Tacitus.*

life. It is his strength and victory when he comes to die. I honor the man who seeks to do good because it is his duty; but to be a burning and a shining light, there must be a burning heart, a soul rejoicing in the service of Jesus. It is a noble spectacle to behold a Christian calmly meeting the last struggle, enduring with patience the pains of a protracted illness, and resigning himself tranquilly to the necessity of dying. But is it thus a Christian ought to die? Oh, no. It is the privilege of every child of God to have a desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better; to long with holy impatience for the Redeemer of his soul; to close his eyes upon the whole world and feel the sublime attractions of eternity; to exclaim, "My soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord, my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God?" "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly." It is the privilege of every child of God not only to rejoice when fig tree and vine and olive wither, but when the whole universe is receding from his vision. Then, when flesh and heart shall be failing, it will be your privilege, Christian, your consolation and joy, to look up and see the heavens opened, to triumph in an Almighty Saviour who is the strength of your heart and your portion forever, to rejoice in the Lord, to exult with transports ineffable and full of glory in the God of your salvation.

Men and brethren, the truths to which you have listened this morning address themselves to three classes of people, who ought to draw very different conclusions from them.

The first class is composed of those who not only are strangers to this joy, but who treat the whole subject with indifference, if not with contempt. If these people were infidels, their conduct might be explained; but they profess to believe the Bible, they reverence the Bible.—How strange, then, how astonishing and infatuated their course. My friends, have you no desire to know that God in whom you live and move and have your being, with whom your relations are so intimate that, compared with him all earthly objects, those nearest and dearest to you are strangers and at a distance? Have you no wish to

love that God who is the absolute, infinite essential Love, and who seeks to win your heart by such proofs of his love for you? While all holy intelligences find their bliss in harmony with God, can you persist in enmity to him? "Who ever hardened himself against God and prospered?" Can you consent to find all your felicity in this world, and to be "without God?' Without a friend, without human sympathy, without a home—this would be dreary enough. But "*without God!*"—without him who only is the source of all life, peace, strength, victory, glory; to be bereft of light, his love, his compassion, his grace, his salvation;—what an inward central desolateness this. Are you willing to live thus bereaved and lonely, and to die cut off from that joy in the Lord which alone can disarm death of its terrors and make you more than conqueror over death and hell? Can you, will you, make such a choice, and force your way into eternity undone, ruined, wretched, blighted, condemned forever?—forever wilfully, wantonly severed from that joy in the Lord which is the beatific glory and perfection of heaven? Would that I knew what to say to you; but I do not. Mortals, sinners, infatuated slaves of the world, why will you die? Who hath bewitched you? What fatal spell is this which stupifies your minds? —How is it that you suffer all that is noble and rational in your nature to be thus bound and imbruited by the sorcery of your lusts and passions?

But I fear my expostulations, my entreaties, my tears are all in vain. I leave you a spectacle for angels to gaze at in grief and amazement.

The second class consists of those who profess to be Christians; but whose religion has never afforded them any of those consolations which give beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness. And to this class our subject is full of solemn instruction.

Not that there may not be sincere piety with but little sensible delight. The promises of salvation are not to joy, but to faith, to self denial, to obedience. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." The experience of many

who were models of devotion, whose whole lives adorned the Gospel, and who died in the triumphs of a full assurance, has resembled the prophet's day which was "neither clear nor dark, but at the evening time was light." Indeed, there is the highest proof of sincerity in a loyalty which is still faithful and constant, although there are none of those joys which recruit our zeal and reinforce our wearied virtue. Certainly that Christian gives most glory to God, who, when walking in darkness and seeing no light, still stays himself upon the Lord, and says, "Though he slay me yet will I trust him."—Let such be not "weary in well-doing, for in due season they shall reap if they faint not." "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart."—It is good for a man to hope and patiently to wait till the day break and the shadows flee away.

But if there be never any consolation; if our religion be wholly the fruit of conviction, of fear, of stern compulsion, of duty with no relish and refreshment, the case is very suspicious. For can this be the kingdom of God which "is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost?" And if we can rest satisfied under such bereavements; if they do not alarm and afflict us; if we do not earnestly seek by prayer and obedience to secure the joys which God promises to his children; then, indeed, every symptom in our malady is most portentous.

It is, however, above all, to those who have tasted this happiness, but who mourn its loss; whose prayer is "Restore unto us the joys of thy salvation; or who lament that they experience so little of it;—it is to these that our subject applies most directly and emphatically. And to these,—placing myself among them,—let me speak plainly and faithfully in finishing this discourse.

My brethren, it is not often that we have to confess ourselves vanquished by the objections which the world urges against our sermons; but to-day I am compelled to make such a confession. For, while I have been preaching about this sublime happiness, what have those who know us and meet us daily been secretly saying? Shall I tell you? They have been saying, This is all very fine, but it is a fancy sketch. This joy in the Lord would be

indeed a priceless treasure, but who possesses it? Where are the Christians whose lives shew that it sustains and cheers them?

Now these humiliating reproaches we must all acknowledge to be only too well founded, nay to be quite unanswerable. And why is this? Why are we so destitute of this joy, the privation of which is a far sorer penury than any outward poverty? To answer this question we need only examine our own lives, and observe how much they are under the empire of the senses and passions. Each professes, indeed, to believe that religion is the great thing, the one thing needful; but our practical estimate—our cares and toils and sacrifices speak a very different language. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you"—this is God's plan. Our plan is just the reverse; it is first to secure the objects we covet, leaving religion to follow and fall in as it can. Hence we are what we are. Our feelings, tastes, recollections, imaginations are earthly; and our piety is the submission of the mind and the conscience, not the love of the heart, not the holy ardors of a soul united to God by the dearest intimacies, merging, losing itself in him, and finding all its desires not only satisfied but anticipated by the very power of delighting itself in his fullness.

Behold the reason why this joy is such an exile from our bosoms. The barrenness upon us is not that of the fields, but of our souls. Instead of finding in God a happiness which indemnifies us for outward losses, we are well reconciled to spiritual famine if we can secure external prosperity. And, now, having detected the cause of this evil, let me beseech you,—if your happiness, your usefulness, the health and prosperity of your souls be precious in your sight,—at once to apply the remedy. And as the disease is chronic, the cure must be chronic also.

Do we know but little of this sublime happiness which filled the soul of the prophet? It is because this happiness is the "joy of salvation;" and salvation occupies so little of our thoughts and cares. It is because the passions leave us so little time and taste for heavenly things.

Apply the remedy. The pardon of sin, the appropriation of Christ's righteousness, the peace of a soul reposing in the promises of Eternal Truth, the certainty that all things are working together for our good, the holy rewards of obedience, the consciousness of increasing holiness, the sweetness of communion with the Redeemer, the anticipations of heaven, the earnests and foretastes of heaven,—what things are these, how infinitely superior to all earthly gratifications. Let us appreciate these inestimable blessings. Salvation, so great salvation,—let us seek daily, hourly to know more of the joys of a free, full, present, perfect salvation. This, this alone is worthy of our cares, toils, prayers, sacrifices.

Do we know but little of this sublime, spiritual happiness? It is because this happiness springs from faith, it is rejoicing in the Lord; and our souls are debased by the love of the world and the things of the world. Apply the remedy. Such a world; a world whose maxims and examples war against the soul; a world of which the Holy Spirit warns us that, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him;"—can we forget that bright world to which we are passing and allow this present evil world to fascinate us with its charms, to sweep us along like its own giddy votaries, who know no other God and have tasted no other joys?

Lastly, even when we have come out from the world, after we have seen its general vanity and insufficiency, and have relinquished it,—how constantly do we carry a portion of the world with us into our religion;—each one indemnifying himself for the general renunciation by some darling passion, by some object which is only the more dangerous because, (while in itself not sinful,) it monopolizes all the powers once shared by other objects, and thus,—by absorbing our cares and tastes and thoughts—makes itself the centre and circle of our devotion, becomes our god, and leaves no room for the God of heaven. This, this is the great reason why celestial joy is not ours; and to this most insidious evil let us apply the remedy. Let us not foolishly think to destroy our passions; God has bestowed upon us few nobler endowments; and their extinction would be a suicide more

criminal and insane than that of the body. We cannot extirpate our passions. Those who have attempted this in cloisters and monasteries, furnish mournful exemplifications of the consequences which must follow, when men prescribe to themselves virtues not designed for men. But let us educate our passions. But let us elevate our passions to their true objects. But let us inflame our passions by the prospect of riches, honors, pleasures, spiritual and eternal.

Since it has pleased God to place us in the midst of such an economy, let us not seek to wrench our hearts from objects which ought to be dear to us. But let us school these hearts. Let us ever remember that no earthly object is essential to our happiness. Let us never forget that to all earth-born objects, however endeared and cherished, we are united only by ties which each hour is dissolving. And if, if we must love something supremely, as we must;—if some object must absorb our souls, and fill our hearts, and become the ruling passion, strong in life and stronger in death, and be all our desire and all our bliss———my soul, dost thou not know that object? Hast thou not tasted the preciousness of Him who is "the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely," who alone is worthy of such a treasure as a human heart, and who will repay our love with an affection boundless, changeless, everlasting? O Christian, love him; love him supremely; make him your ruling passion. Venture, venture farther and farther, wade deeper and deeper, till you are swallowed up in the abysses of that love "which passeth knowledge."

My brethren, my beloved brethren, shall any mortal thing dispute our hearts with Jesus? And possessed of his love, what is any earthly privation? What a gain would be the loss of the whole world, if thus our hearts were enlarged to make room for him; if bereft of all, we were thus taught to cling only the more closely to that ever lovely, loving and beloved Redeemer.

Enter into these truths, my dear hearers, and you will not be without spiritual pleasures. You will find wisdom's ways to be ways of pleasantness and all her paths peace. Not only hereafter, and *for* keeping God's com-

mandments—but now, and "*in*" keeping his commandments you will reap "great reward." You will rejoice evermore. You will "have your rejoicing in yourself alone, and not in another." United to Jesus by a vital faith, knowing him, loving him, living in harmony with him, all earthly joys will be increased, the sting will be so plucked out of all earthly griefs that you will be "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing;" and—mounting to God—gathering all your hopes and confidences and concentrating them in him—exulting that the universe contains such a treasure, and in the full triumphant assurance that this treasure is yours forever—you will exclaim with the sacred rapture of the prophet, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herds in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Sermon Twelfth.

MERCY REMEMBERED IN WRATH.*

"O Lord, in Wrath remember Mercy."—HABAKKUK iii : 2.

THERE are some duties which we never feel until our souls are bowed in humility; and the convictions of which will be erased by the incessant cares of life, its restless urgencies and activities, unless we are frequently reminded of them. They resemble signs and notices traced on our pavements, which we can read only when we look down, and which must be often swept and sometimes renewed, or they will be entirely obliterated.

Of these duties the most important is the practical recognition of God, as the inspector and controller of all things, the supreme moral governor of all men. God is so great, and we are so insignificant, that it is preposterous to suppose he observes our thoughts and actions,—such is the atheism of some men; but nothing can be more insincere than this pretext. For—not to speak of the impiety concealed under an affectation of humility, which makes Jehovah such an one as ourselves and excludes him from the management of the earth—let these libertines be betrayed into a single good deed and they at once regard God as their debtor and seem to think that he has nothing to do but to notice and reward this little parenthetical accident in a whole life of sin. Others

* Preached on Thursday, September 26, 1861, a Day appointed by the President of the United States for National Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer.

deny that God can ever be angry with us for our actions, since sin is never against him but for him. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" "Both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever thy hand, and thy counsel determined before to be done." "Why then doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?" I remember but a single passage in all the Scriptures, in which God shuts up the mouth of one of his creatures who pleads with him, and it is the overwhelming rebuke administered to an incorrigible scoffer, who had insulted Jehovah with this very blasphemy,—to whom the Apostle says, "Nay, but who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?"

The words to which I have invited your meditations this morning speak of God's wrath for sin. On this solemn day we are summoned to hear not only "the rod," but "who hath appointed it.' It was a season of suffering and rebuke, of fierce indignation and fearful omen, when the prophet uttered the text. Upon such a day, we have assembled in this temple, and I know no language, no supplication, more exactly suited to our condition than that I have read, "O Lord, in wrath remember mercy."

I. Habakkuk uttered this prayer for the nation.—Tempests and hurricanes try the strength of a ship, and disclose its leaks. And as a people we come before God in a time of terrible calamity, when everything in our political organization is strained and staggering and threatening shipwreck; when the noble vessel which, freighted with such rich and glorious hopes, once rode triumphantly on her course, is quivering from keelson to crosstrees, is smitten by blasts and lashed by raging billows that may well cause the heart of the stoutest pilot to quail and his face to gather paleness. Thirty years ago there appeared on the skirts of our horizon a cloud no bigger than a man's hand. There it has since hung portentously, mustering gloomy elements of destruction, ever and anon shooting baleful fires, muttering deep

though distant thunders. And now the heavens are all black with clouds, and a storm is discharging itself upon us, sweeping like a tropical tornado, mocking to scorn all human skill and power in its fierceness and its fury. Such is our condition. And the first truth suggested by the text and the occasion is, that as a nation we are guilty, and God is angry with us for our sins.

While partisan politics should be scrupulously excluded from the pulpit, the duties of states, rulers, legislators, are a very different thing, and belong to religion. In the teachings of the Bible, nations have an organic character, and they are constantly held to a responsibility for their conduct as rigorous as that of individuals.* Nor was there ever a period when it was more necessary to urge upon governments the great maxim, recorded by the wisest of princes, after long experience, that "Righteousness exalteth a nation."

"Righteousness;" and by this I mean true religion. Governments are established for purposes strictly temporal, churches for purposes strictly spiritual. The union of Church and State is, therefore, as incongruous a thing as would be the combination of the church with a gas company or a railroad corporation. But let us not go to the other extreme. Let us never forget that a state, like an individual, must have a religion. Civil law and philosophy cannot repress the depravities of our nature. Without the controlling fear of God, men would have to be governed as the keeper of wild beasts predominates over his menagerie—distributing food to some, and blows to others whose might and ferocity could rend him to pieces in a moment. A state must have a religion,

* "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." "That the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zachariah, which perished between the altar and the temple; Verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation." These and similar passages find their interpretation in the fact that nations are regarded as moral persons, having a certain duration of life and accountable for their conduct.

and it must be the true religion; otherwise, Solomon's proverb is a glaring falsehood. How can a nation be elevated by the religion of idolatry, which mocks God and degrades all that is noble in humanity? How can a nation be exalted by the religion of superstition, which stultifies the human intellect? or by the faith of the fanatic, with its unrelenting malignity? or by the heresy of the antinomian, which turns the grace of God into licentiousness?

By "Righteousness" I mean the doctrines and spirit of the Gospel. These are the true strength and glory of a nation—a proposition this which is almost self-evident.

For, if we use the term nation as comprehending the whole people, we at once feel that the real prosperity and glory of a community are not wealth, nor numbers, nor flourishing commerce, nor splendid palaces, nor magnificent armies and victories and triumphal arches. May God deliver us from such prosperity, unless it be hallowed to a noble use. The great thing in a state is man himself; and the only true prosperity of a people is the moral elevation of the citizen—the intelligence, virtue, integrity, domestic purity, which cause the human soul to grow, and which are inbred and nourished by the religion of Jesus. Society is a structure whose stability depends not upon the accomplishments and refinements of a few elevated minds, but upon the principles which the Gospel establishes in the public heart and conscience; it is a monument supported by its granite base, not by the sculptured ornaments that decorate and crown its shaft.

Or, if we employ the word nation with reference to the government, there is no civil polity which Christianity does not convert into a source of honor and happiness. It corrects the abuses of a monarchy; it rebukes the pride and ambition of an aristocracy; above all, it reaches and purifies the springs of a popular administration, shedding the most healthful influence over all the institutions of the republic.

Nations, then, like individuals, are accountable to God. Governments are kept to a strict reckoning, and the constituency who invest rulers with authority are dealt with

as stewards to whom God has delegated most solemn trusts. And, now, if a nation—especially a nation blessed with the Gospel—shall be perfidious to its duty, why then it stands before the Moral Governor of the universe as a heinous criminal, and will be dealt with as such. It will be dealt with *now*. For individuals there is a judgment after death, and they may be left to the retributions of eternity; but nations, as such, exist only in the present economy. While it is most unjust, then, to pronounce any man guilty because he is afflicted—a cruelty which Jesus condemned in the insinuation of the Jews as to the man born blind—it may be affirmed with positive certainty, that no judgment ever falls upon a nation except as a chastisement for national sins. And it is with equity that nations are sorely punished. "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it"—such is the language in which Jehovah declares that nations are established by him for high and holy purposes. Their work is of course transcendently more momentous than that of any individual. They are the ministers, the apostles created and ordained by sovereign wisdom and love for the sublimest mission; and just in proportion to the trust confided to them, will be their guilt, if they prove faithless.

My friends, the propositions which I have thus advanced commend themselves at once to your minds. Nor can I have announced these truths even thus generally, without forcing upon you the conviction that we are most guilty, and that God is correcting us for our sins. When, where, I ask you, under the whole heavens, has there ever been a people so distinguished by the special marks of the favor of the Most High? When, where, a people so signally raised up to be a blessing to the whole earth? And when, where, a people who have been more perfidious to their high calling? "And shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord, shall not my soul be avenged upon such a nation as this?"

All this, however, I feel to be too vague. These generalities affect nobody. Let us then go a little into detail. Of course, you will understand me as referring to our

sins before any disruption had severed the Union and rent it into hostile fragments. Were I to speak of the iniquities now crying to heaven from every portion of the land, I should be compelled to place this unnatural war at the head of the list. Upon whom the guilt lies, I leave for the Judge of all to determine. I owe it to you, who have ever generously spared your pastor the misery of seeing the harmony of a church dearer to him than life disturbed by politics—I owe it to the sanctity of this hour—to the charity of this place—to the purity of this pulpit from which Christ only has ever been preached, not to breathe a whisper upon so delicate and painful a question.

My brethren, when I so far forget my duty to you, to my office, to my Master who says "My kingdom is not of this world,"—when I can so degrade the Christian ministry, as to descend into the arena of political strife and partisan clamor; above all, when, at such an awful crisis as this, instead of weeping between the porch and the altar and mingling with you in the profoundest humiliation, instead of lifting up that cross which speaks peace among men—I am found fulminating anathemas from this desk, seeking to inflame the worst passions of the human heart, and to intensify wrath, hatred, malice, vindictiveness among those who ought to love as brothers; —when I am thus recreant to men and to God, then cease to respect me, class me among those apostates from the religion of the meek and loving Jesus who have for years been casting firebrands into that temple, around whose altars our fathers—the Morning Stars of this glorious Republic—sang together and shouted for joy.

But were I to speak of the sins now crying to heaven from every part of the land, I would place this dismal fratricidal war at the head of the dark catalogue. For war is a crime, always everywhere a crime, the prolific source of the worst crime; nor can any man become its advocate who reflects upon the immortality and accountability of the thousands that, wholly unprepared, with the fiercest passions glowing in their breasts, are hurried instantaneously from the battle-field into the presence of the Supreme Judge. The only arms of a Christian, his

only victories are those of peace.* Jesus commands us to love our enemies, and to do them all the good we can; war requires us to hate our enemies, and to do them all the harm we can. In the words of the Apostle, "Wars and fightings come from the lusts that war in our corrupt natures." In the language of one of the noblest men of this or any age—of one whose work has long been a classic in our schools and colleges, and whom I must ever love and honor, "all wars are contrary to the revealed will of God; and the individual has no right to commit to society, nor society to commit to the government, the power to declare war. Hence, to all arguments brought in favor of war, it would be a sufficient answer, that God has forbidden it, and that no consequences can be possibly conceived to arise from keeping his law, so terrible as those which must arise from violating it. God commands us to love every man, alien or citizen, Samaritan or Jew, as ourselves; and the act neither of society, nor of government can render it our duty to violate this command."†

But this thought has carried me farther than I intended. You will understand me as alluding to the United States in their integrity; for it is in reference to our sins as a whole people, that God is punishing us. It is of these sins I speak.

And, now, what shall I say? Where shall I begin? Where can I end? "Ah! sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters; they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger. Why should ye be stricken any more? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint, from the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores." God in mercy grant, that it may not be necessary soon to add the dreary dirge of the prophet which follows that description: "Your country is desolate, your cities burnt with fire, your land strangers devour it in your presence."

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*Victoriæ difficiles, quidem, et cruentæ, illis belliciis et cruentis longe pulchriores.—Milton, Defens, Sec. p. 731.

†Wayland's Moral Science, p. 441.

Our Sins. And let me begin with those of our General Government. It is the doctrine of demagogues, that, as the whole people cannot meet, they elect delegates who are to obey their instructions. But this idea of principal and agent has no place in a representative government. The true theory of such a system is, that men are chosen who are eminent for wisdom, uprightness, dignity, experience, and that they are to administer public affairs for the good of the nation. Now, our Federal Government rests entirely upon the Constitution; but, while we profess to be a Christian people, that Constitution is a document absolutely atheistical. Regarded only in its political aspects, that instrument is certainly a noble monument of human wisdom and patriotism. Would that its integrity had ever been preserved inviolate! Were I not a Christian I could know no wish dearer to my heart, than once more to see that august charter restored to its original virtue,—knowing no North, no South, no East, no West—but, full high advanced as an ensign to the nation, like the pillar of fire and cloud, heralding a united people to honor and true glory. But, while the jurist must admire the Constitution, the Christian must regard it with sorrow and alarm. From the first word to the last, there is not even an allusion to that Being who is the king of nations, who, armed with infinite power, pervades all nature with his presence, and sits as Supreme Head of the universe. Had it been composed by Pagans, or Mohammedans, or Atheists, it could not have shut out every idea of Deity with a more irreligious precaution.

Under the provisions of this Constitution, legislators and rulers are appointed by the people; and what, at least for forty years, have been the qualifications required? Disinterestedness? virtue? piety? Nothing of the kind. The single question has everywhere been as to allegiance to some faction struggling for power. He is a good Democrat, a good Republican, his record shows his loyalty to a party, if elected all his energies will be devoted to a party, he will seek to exalt a party, and to secure the spoils of victory for a party. Suppose, during any canvass for the last forty years, that some candidate had been proposed, whose claim was based upon his uprightness

and purity, what caucus would have selected such a leader? Suppose (but the very idea is preposterous) that at the hustings people should ever have been urged to range themselves on the Lord's side, and to cast their suffrages for a man, because—in addition to other excellences — he was superior to party, and was a meek and faithful disciple of Jesus; where, when, would such an appeal have provoked anything but astonishment and secret ridicule? Reflect upon the arts and intrigues employed to secure success at our elections. It may be safely affirmed, that, from Maine to Texas, bribery and corruption have been the common weapons of political rivalry, and that the traffic in votes has got to be a business as well established and as industriously and systematically pursued as any merchandize in the stores or the shambles. Thus elected, our rulers and representatives assemble at Washington; and you know what the eye of God has seen there, with a few noble exceptions. There the Sabbath has been openly despised. There the name of God has been everywhere blasphemed. There pride, luxury, licentiousness, have held their carnivals. There power and patronage have been abused for selfish and mercenary objects. There vast sums extorted from honest industry have been most profligately wasted and often embezzled. And there—in the very halls which ought to be consecrated to calm wisdom and true patriotism, to the good of mankind and the fear of God,—there has been exhibited a ruffianism which would have disgraced barbarians. Sectional rancor, party malignity, low, ribald, personal scurrility—these have long been among the most striking elements of our parliamentary rhetoric. And bludgeons, daggers, pistols, bowie knives, the threats and blows of the assassin, the deliberate murders of the duellist—these have been the conspicuous proofs of our parliamentary wisdom and piety. And think you, my friends, as the Lord formerly said to his prophet Ezekiel, think you, "it is a light thing that such abominations are committed?" No, God will visit, God is now visiting us for sins like these in high places.

When from the General Government we pass to that of the States, we find the same sins flaunting through the

land; the same bribery, the same corruptions, the same frauds, the same embezzlements, the same violence, the same—in short, the same outrages upon all religion and patriotism. But looking at this State, becoming a prophet in my own country, I find a new count in the indictment. I refer to Slavery. All who know anything of so humble an individual as myself, know my sentiments as to this institution. Here it is. We are not responsible for its introduction; and he is either a politician, or a man made mad not by much learning but much ignorance, who asserts that it would be wise suddenly to eradicate it from our social system. But have we been faithful to this other race who are in our power, and therefore especially entrusted to our care? Have we recognized their relation to us as members of a common fatherhood and brotherhood? Have we rendered to them—to their bodies, minds, souls—"the things that are just and equal, remembering that we too have a Master in heaven?"

Let us go on and glance at the guilt of our churches. Jesus is especially jealous of the purity and fidelity of his church; it is his peculiar treasure, purchased with his own blood. There have been many fiery disputes as to the true church. Peace to the ashes of all such controversies! In the Scriptures the Greek term translated "church" is *ecclesia*, a noun derived from the verb *eccaleo*, to call out. The church of Christ is a body called by grace out of the world; called that it may, by its holiness, condemn the world, as righteous Lot "condemned the wickedness of Sodom;" called to exemplify the doctrines of the Gospel, and thus be a light to the world. The members of this church publicly profess that they "are not their own,"—that their wealth, talents, influence, time, life, are all offered as a grateful sacrifice to the Redeemer. Nor is their duty restricted to this or any land. The church exists under a constitution which binds it to "go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Enter into these truths; then look at the bodies called churches and the people called Christians, —the worldliness, pride, covetousness, selfishness, which have effaced almost entirely every line of demarkation between the church and the world. "Are there not with

you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?" — Nor tell me that, for this perfidy and perjury, God will punish the churches. This is true. To the minister commissioned to execute vengeance upon guilty Jerusalem the command was "Begin at my sanctuary." Judgment may begin at the house of God; but—as the fires of Sodom paid no regard to the houses and possessions of Lot,—so, when Jonah betrayed his trust, the winds and waves did not distinguish between him and those who were with him, but smote the ship until it was well nigh "broken in pieces."

It is a beautiful thought of the Apostle, when writing to heads of families among the first disciples, he sends greetings to the "churches in their houses." In the contemplation of the Gospel, every Christian family ought to be a church. There, within a shrine more sacred than aisle and chancel and "fretted vault," the father, as a priest over his own house, is to offer morning and evening incense. And there the holy influence of a mother's love is to embrace the earliest affections of her children—their young faith, hope, love—and twine them like tendrils around the Cross, that they may spring and grow upwards. The family ought to find its type not only in the church on earth, but the church in heaven. What a mournful contrast to such a community is presented to the sight of God by the families of this land. To what different objects are the cares and solicitudes of most parents devoted. I know that when your child dies, you assure us that your great concern is about the soul and its salvation; but how can we believe you, when we observe your conduct towards those children who are still spared? when we see in you scarcely a desire that they may be humble followers of Jesus, but restless, boundless anxiety that they may be rich and honored, may gratify those passions which war against the soul? You are priests, not to devote your offspring to God, but to decorate them as offerings to the world and its fatal attractions. Here, in this domestic unfaithfulness, is a crime so unnatural and shocking, that God's peculiar displeasure burns against it; and we hear his prophet uttering this frightful anathema: "Pour out thy fury upon the families that call not upon thy name."

Up to this time I have been speaking of the sins committed by bodies raised up by God to meet the social wants of our nature. But as these organizations are composed of the members of society, if we would go to the sources of our crimes, we must turn our eyes to the community around us. And, when we draw within the circle of our observation the character and manners of the world in which we live, what dismal phenomena present themselves on every side. "Thus saith the Lord, for three transgressions of Damascus, yea for four, will I not turn away the punishment thereof.

Atheism. We are shocked at this charge. But God is the moral Governor of the universe. Not to recognize him is atheism. And we can look nowhere, without seeing that, in their thoughts, their plans, their whole lives, almost all men are "without God in the world."

Ingratitude. Review the history of this nation, and you will instinctively exclaim, "He hath not dealt thus with any people." How have we dealt with him? Instead of leading us to repentance, his goodness has nourished vanity, boasting, an insane independence. Our vaunted refinement has been a whited sepulchre, fair without, but "within full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." Wealth has become a snare and a bane. Prosperity has ministered to pride, arrogance, luxury.—"Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God." These disasters were needed. God has tried blessings upon us; he is now trying judgments. He is saying "I will go and return unto my place, till they acknowledge their offences and seek my face. In their affliction they will seek me early."

A degeneracy from all true love of country. Mr. Webster was the last of a noble army of martyrs who took in the whole Republic in their ample patriotism; and he fell a victim to his magnanimity. We have become a nation of politicians and scramblers for office, giving up to section and party and self, the zeal and devotion which were due the public weal; filled under the pretence of principle with restless eager vanity; convulsing society by the incessant, often vindictive struggles of ambition in men born for obscurity, and who hesitate at nothing—

no calumny, corruption, treachery—if they may but supplant a rival and grasp that most seductive of all prizes, political power.

A fourth evil under our sun has been *the decay of that love of liberty* which inspired the venerable Father of his country and all those heroical men who laid the foundations of this free government, causing them to pledge their lives, their interests and their sacred honor to an undertaking so sublime. This loyalty to freedom has long been "ready to die." If these distractions continue long, I fear a ruined, demoralized, exhausted people will be ready to exchange liberty for repose even under a despotism. May God help us to "be watchful and strengthen the things that remain."

Everywhere among our population is seen a fifth and heinous iniquity. It is a *contempt for the Revelation* which has been in mercy vouchsafed to us. No mortal thought can appreciate the worth of the Bible, the Sabbath and the Sanctuary. That volume, to unloose whose seals the Lamb of God welcomed death, has not only been openly assailed by Infidelity, but its sacred pages have been everywhere neglected. The Sanctuary has been despised. And for convenience, for pleasure, for profit, the Sabbath has been profaned by the people, by corporations, by judges, by rulers; and this often under the auspices of legislative enactments.

In enumerating the sins which especially attract the curses of heaven, Isaiah specifies one which is peculiarly an American vice, though it is indeed the besetting sin of humanity. "Wo unto them who add house to house, and land to land." "Covetousness is idolatry." Idolatry is not a speculative error; it bows the whole man down, and binds and moulds all the passions of its votaries.—Hence idolatry is the object of God's signal detestation. And if this be so, we can be at no loss for the cause of these chastisements visited upon this nation. For here is an idolatry which pervades all classes and conditions. To it the whole land is devoted as a temple. Its power surrounds and presses us like the atmosphere. Seven days are too few for its week of sabbaths. Day and night are too short for its devout worship.

We are a by-word over the whole earth for this reckless lust of money; for a profligate eagerness to amass large fortunes, with but little prudery about the means employed. Our mercantile code has repealed every letter of the Sermon on the Mount. On 'Change, it is not Jesus, but Machiavelli who teaches ethics. Success is merit, failure is crime. Uprightness is no longer with us—what it was to our simple forefathers—an ultimate good; it is only the means to an end. The morality of trade finds its oracles neither in the Word of God nor in conscience, but in the low calculations of expediency and profit. Honesty is a virtue while it is the best policy; otherwise it is a commodity too costly for us to deal in.

A reputation for integrity is chiefly important because it is a profitable investment. The great thing is to get money. If the representative man of this age and country could, like Paul, be caught up into the third heaven, it would prove only the ecstasy of a speculator and adventurer; his only beatific vision would be the golden streets; and when brought back his only grief would be that so many trodden shekels had been left behind. At every turn is seen the jobber described by Solomon, saying, "It is naught, it is naught, but when he goeth his way, then he boasteth." This every day rogue is, however, too insignificant to attract much notice. If we would comprehend the cool atrocity of unprincipled and exhaustless enterprise which has placed us, as a commercial people, upon such a bad eminence, we must study it in our stock gamblers, and rich bankrupts, and above all in the plunderers of our public exchequers. That a man may be honest as a citizen, pious as a church member, and yet an unscrupulous knave as a politician—this is a maxim not confined to us. But there is one proverb, of which we can claim the exclusive authorship. It is, that fraud loses half its infamy, by losing all its timidity. What would be theft in a shop, is, in a public office, the commendable forethought of the unjust steward in the parable. The felony which would consign a merchant's clerk to the dungeon for life, need only be committed against the Government, and be multiplied by a hundred thousand, and it at once rises to something like respecta-

bility. It meets not only sympathy, but a sort of admiration.

As I said, however, I will never have done with these details. Everywhere guilt and corruption stalk abroad with unblushing front. The land mourns for drunkenness; and this State, like others, derives much of its revenue from licenses to curse women with a blight far more mournful than widowhood, to make children worse than orphans, to destroy soul and body for time and eternity. Men's mouths are full of cursing; children are baptized unto profanity, and are perfected in it at our schools and on our streets. In fine, Jehovah says, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." And if ever a people defied that imprecation, we are the people. Men and brethren, Cotton is not king; God is King. Gunpowder is not king; education is not king; the constitution is not king; the people are not king; the President is not king; the army is not king. No, no, "The Lord he is God, the Lord he is God." But, as fire had to come down from heaven, and vindicate the sovereignty of Jehovah, and thus extort from Israel that sublime confession; so God will have to burn up our earthly confidences, before we will know that the Lord is God, and, casting away all our idols, will crown Jesus Lord of all.

II. As a nation we are most guilty and God is angry with us for our sins; I was right when I made this assertion. I pass now to a second truth of most solemn portent, which I must treat briefly, but to which, for that very reason, it becomes you all at this time to give the more earnest heed. This proposition is, that present chastisements are oftentimes only the precursors of more fearful dispensations.

That judgment has begun upon us, you, alas! require no preacher to warn you. It is written in the Book of Judges, that when Benjamin, "little Benjamin," was alienated from Israel, the men of all the other tribes "came to the house of God, and abode there till evening before God, and lifted up their voices and wept sore, and said O Lord God of Israel, why is this come to pass in

Israel, that there should be to-day one tribe lacking in Israel?" Would that we had witnessed such a lovely spectacle of affection among the members of this Union, at the period when one of them, a little one—but dear to my heart—was separated from the other States. Would that we could see this spirit of true patriotism and piety to-day. Would that—instead of declamations and harangues which exasperate malignant passions—we all, the people, the rulers, the ministers of Christ, were this morning gathered in the house of God, bathed in tears, and saying, O Lord God of our Fathers, why is this come to pass in the land, that there should be so many tribes lacking in Israel? Why is it? Who is guilty of the sin which hath brought this sore calamity upon us? Search us, O God—and search our brethren who are severed from us, and restore us to the paths of righteousness and peace! Nor has there been only alienation. "The primal eldest curse" is on us. The soil redeemed by our common fathers has been soaked with fraternal blood. Such is our bitter affliction, after naming which, I can hardly think of our commercial stagnation and desolation, sad as that is; or of the pecuniary distress and poverty which multitudes are facing but cannot outface.

All this, however, may be only the premonition of what is to come. There is at present a pause;—may it not be that God is giving us "space to repent?"—that he has waited for this day, to try us and see if we will humble ourselves and forsake our sins? There is a pause;—but it may be only the calm which precedes the rush of the whirlwind—the interval between the roar of a distant park of artillery, and the crash of the iron tempest shivering, shattering everything in its path.

Present judgments are the precursors of more fearful judgments, when, instead of bowing humbly before the Chastener and seeking deliverance from him, a people harden their hearts and proudly rely upon their own wisdom and power. Thus it was with Pharoah. At first he reeled under the strokes from an unseen almighty hand; but soon he rallied, and resolved to brave and fight the crisis out in his own imperial grandeur. You remember the issue. Bolt followed bolt, till he perished miserably

forever. How does this article apply to you, my brethren? I do not know. I cannot decide. I therefore say nothing. But you know. You can decide. You can answer.

Present judgments are premonitions of more fearful judgments, when the terrors and supplications of a people have reference not to their guilt, but to their dangers and losses. "Lord when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see." Nothing can more outrage a jealous God than this temper which, even under his chastisements, only proves how resolutely he is contemned, and how tenaciously the world is loved. Genuine sorrow is described as "Godly sorrow"—that is to say, it is sorrow such as we may suppose God to feel in view of sin: it is grief like that which pierced the Redeemer's heart, when he saw the city and wept over it; it is anguish for the insult offered to the tenderest of Fathers, and for the wrong inflicted upon the soul. With this the Scriptures contrast "the sorrow of the world,"—a distress purely selfish—misery, not from a sense of the evil of sin, but from the fear of its punishment. How does this article apply to you, my brethren? I do not know. I cannot decide. I therefore say nothing. But you know. You can decide. You can answer.

Our last maxim as to the laws by which God is wont to regulate his dealings with a people when once he begins to afflict them, has respect to the sincerity of their repentance under his first visitations. "The word of the Lord came unto me saying, at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down and to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do them." At the commencement of this year we assembled in this sanctuary to confess our sins as a nation and individuals, to humble ourselves beneath the impending vengeance of heaven, and to hear and obey "the voice of the rod." Were you then sincere? Or did you only mock God? "When he slew them, then they sought him; they returned and enquired early after God; and they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their Redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their

mouths, and they lied unto him with their tongues." It rests with you, men and brethren, to apply this thought. How does it affect you? What have been the fruits of all the confessions you uttered on that solemn fast-day? of all the vows you then made? of all the tears you then shed? I do not know. I cannot speak. I cannot answer. But you know. You can speak. You can answer.

And yet why may I not speak? why may I not decide? why should I not answer? Ah, my brethren, my brethren, if I were to apply these tests severely, and by them forecast your destiny, I should have no heart to stand here and plead with you for God, or with God for you. If I did not remember that into whatever depths we may sink, the blood of Christ can reach and rescue us,—that "even from thence, if we seek the Lord our God, we shall find him, if we seek him with all our heart and with all our soul,"—if I did not remember this, I should be dumb, for my ministry could be only a prophecy of mourning, lamentation, and woe; fearfulness and trembling would take hold on me, and rivers of waters would run down my eyes, for I would know that the calamities now pressing upon us are only the faint presages of calamities far more terrible; coming events would, to my vision, scarf and muffle up all the future in lurid dismal clouds and darkness. If God's ways were as our ways, and his thoughts as our thoughts, my ears would but take in these dreadful words, "I will cast them out of my sight. Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me; for I will not hear thee." "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, my mind could not be towards this people." If God's ways were as our ways, and his thoughts as our thoughts———but, blessed be his gracious name! hosannahs to that love which hath interposed to save the lost, to respite the righteous sentence and arrest the lifted thunder! thanks be unto God! his ways are not as our ways, neither are his thoughts as our thoughts. It is when reasoning with guilty man on this very subject of pardon for the vilest, that our injured Father repeats over and over the most earnest tender as-

surances of his long-suffering forgiving mercy. And it is these assurances which embolden me again to unite with you and lead your devotions on this solemn occasion. It is because "He, being full of compassion, forgives our iniquities and destroys us not, but many a time turns his anger away, and does not stir up all his wrath,"—it is this which has encouraged me to come here, and exhort, animate, console you; to conjure you by the mercies of God, and by all your hopes and fears, that your penitence, your faith, your reformation may be such as to avert the overhanging wrath, and to attract the blessings promised to the humble and the contrite.

"O Lord, in wrath remember mercy!" This was the prayer with which I began this discourse. And this prayer I adjure you to make your fervent, effectual, unrelaxing supplication, until these calamities shall be overpast. But remember, this prayer is the cry of a soul lying low before God, and fixing its pleading eye steadfastly upon that great atonement through which alone mercy can reach such wretches as we are. Nor can it be uttered sincerely, unless we enter into its spirit and breathe all its sighs and aspirations.

This prayer cannot be ours, until we awake from insensibility under the anger of the great and dreadful God. "Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king nor any of his servants." Apathy under God's judgments is an "evident token of perdition" upon a smitten people. And with reason. For it betrays a rooted unbelief, hardness, contempt, most insulting to the Majesty of heaven.

Nor can we truly utter this prayer, until we recognize God's purposes in chastening us, and comply with them. Whether he afflicts us to bring our sins to remembrance, or to show us their heinousness, or to wean us from our idolatry, or to assert his sovereignty over us and all we have and hope for, our first duty is to correspond to his movements. "Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee, yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments." "I will say unto God, do not condemn me. Show me wherefore thou contendest with me." "Clouds and darkness are round about thee; righteousness and judgment

are the habitation of thy throne." Such must be the language of our hearts; and our lives must attest the sincerity of this confession, this sympathy with the divine will concerning us.

Lastly, we use this prayer and supplication only when, acknowledging our sins, having our iniquities always before us, we renounce all other hope and cast ourselves utterly upon the mercy of God through Christ Jesus our Saviour. To frame excuses—to trust in our own strength, in chariots and horses and armies—to confess the sins of others and exaggerate their guilt, and dare to appeal to the scrutiny of Omniscient Justice for our own innocence—all this is impiously to invoke unmingled wrath, unmitigated ruin.

No, no, there is only one single hope left us: "O Lord, in wrath, remember mercy." But this hope is left us, and inspired by this hope, I do not despond for this land; I am full of confidence; my soul rises from the dust, and stands erect, and rejoices in full assurance of compassion, mercy, deliverance from on high. I cannot despond, for my expectations are from Him who hath promised, and who "keepeth covenant and mercy." I will not, cannot despond. God's love in times past forbids the thought, that he will abandon us amidst these raging waves, that he can leave us to perish in this fiery ordeal. His own right hand, his stretched out arm hath planted a people on these shores. He hath distinguished them above all nations by his loving kindness and tender care. He hath been our help in ages gone by; and, "because he hath been our help, therefore in the shadow of his wings we will rejoice." This whole people, from ocean to ocean, from the lakes to the gulf, have cried to him again and again. This day, we—the people, the rulers, magistrates, judges, his churches—fall at his feet, and, with united heart and voice, deprecate the vengeance we justly merit, and supplicate the mercy he hath graciously promised. "Promotion cometh neither from the East, nor from the West, nor from the South; but God is the judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another." And, though these afflictions are for the present not joyous but most grievous and heart-rending, yet I must question the effi-

cacy of prayer, before I can doubt that "afterwards they will work the peaceable fruits of righteousness," through the overruling power and wisdom of Him who doeth all things well.

But it is time for me to finish. My dearly beloved friends and brethren, I have spoken to you not as I wished, but as I could. You have heard truths not designed to flatter but to save you, and uttered in the simplicity, honesty, affection which become a Christian pulpit. Instead of neglecting this call to humiliation, fasting and prayer, I have eagerly availed myself of it. I only wish we could observe such a day every week, until our cries shall move Him who doth not willingly afflict the children of men, who threatens that he may be disarmed. If we have any fear of God, if any love for our whole country, for man, for the suffering cause of Jesus at home and abroad,—we must welcome any and every occasion for devout fasting, humiliation, and supplication.

I do implore you all to cherish the deep solemnity due to a time like this. "The Lord hath watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us." God's wrath so far surpasses all other calamities, that the very thought of it would agitate, alarm, frighten us, were we not blinded and stupefied by sin. This wrath has now begun to descend upon our guilty land. Jehovah is saying, "Now will I shortly pour out my fury upon thee, and accomplish my anger upon thee, and I will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense thee for all thy abominations. And my eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity. I will recompense thee according to thy ways, and the abominations in the midst of thee; and you shall know that I am the Lord. The time is come, the day draweth near. Destruction cometh, and they shall seek peace, and there shall be none. I will do unto them after their way, according to their deserts will I judge them, and they shall know that I am the Lord." Brethren, dear brethren, God is serious in his present dealings with us; oh, let us be serious. Through our cities and villages, and in our own streets; a voice is heard, wailing out this warning, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be de-

stroyed." Let us, like that doomed capital, clothe ourselves in sackcloth and ashes. "The wrath of man worketh never the righteousness of God."

The wrath, clamor, bitterness, vindictiveness, crimination and recrimination, which have so often profaned our national fasts, would be shocking to every moral sentiment in an hour like this; they would be scarcely more insane and impious at the last judgment and before the great white throne. Whatever others do, let us abhor ourselves before God as a nation, and let us with one voice cry unto him and say, "O Lord, in wrath remember mercy."

Nor let us be satisfied with general confessions, which are almost always only an ingenious mode of deceiving and flattering ourselves in our own eyes. We should lament the iniquities abounding in the land, but we can repent only of our own sins. Let each of us enter into his own bosom, and explore his own heart and life. "*I hearkened and heard but they spake not aright; no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done?*" Let each enquire: "Lord is it I? Lord is it I?" "Let us turn every one from his evil way, and who can tell if God will turn and repent and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" "Search *me*, O God, and know *my* heart; try *me*, and know *my* thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in *me* and lead *me* in the way everlasting."

Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. Let us prepare for this solemn interview, whether in the judgments now upon us, or in the judgment after death. After all, whatever may betide us, God's will must triumph. Be this our consolation in the darkest moment. What his inscrutable wisdom designs, I know not; whether to break up these once United States, and to make of them two great nations, who, forgetting this unnatural strife, cherishing only the hallowed memories of the past, shall live side by side in alliance and amity; or whether to reconstruct the Union, to corroborate its vigor by teaching us many severe lessons of mutual forbearance, of honest compliance with constitutional compacts, of reciprocal dependence, of political

wisdom and religious obligation; or whether to destroy us altogether, as he has blotted out other guilty empires. But this one thing I know, that all shall work together for his glory and for the good of them that love and obey him.

And I know more. I know that we are rapidly passing away, and shall to-morrow stand amidst the realities of that eternity, in the light of which all earthly things will shrink into insignificance, all mortal conflicts will appear only as the delirious frenzy of lunatics contending about straws. For we shall then see that the soul alone has real greatness, that salvation alone is worthy of our cares and toils and sacrifices. Let us save our souls. Let us secure the great salvation. Let us prepare to meet our God in death and at the dread tribunal. Jesus is the "hiding place from the wind, and the covert from the tempest." Sheltered beneath his cross, we are safe for time and eternity.

Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless. "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee, and hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." Into these pavilions, these inner sanctuaries of almighty power, unerring wisdom, eternal faithfulness and love, let us enter. And let our prayers for a guilty land cause all these chambers to resound, till our cries go up into the ear and penetrate and melt the heart of that God who is waiting to be gracious.

"O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; we have sinned, and have committed iniquity and have done wickedly and have rebelled even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments. O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day;—to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel that are near and that are far off, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him; neither have we

obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws which he set before us by his servants the prophets. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing that they might not obey thy voice. Therefore the curse is poured upon us. O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thy anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain; because for our sins and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thy own sake, O my God; for thy city and thy people are called by thy name."

"O Lord, in wrath remember mercy."

Sermon Thirteenth.

THE CHRISTIAN DELIVERED FROM FEAR OF DEATH.*

"FORASMUCH then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil: And deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.—HEB. ii: 14, 15.

"WHETHER we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation." It may seem hard that—besides their studies, toils and sacrifices—pastors must be smitten by God for the sake of their flocks; but any sorrow should be welcome to us, when we remember what he endured who "loved the Church and gave himself for it." The Scriptures, indeed, represent this as a sublime privilege, that to us it is given thus to be partakers of Christ's afflictions—"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the Church." Nor can tongue tell nor thought conceive the sweetness of those consolations which are mercifully vouchsafed to ministers, while passing through this discipline, by him "who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

The passage selected for this morning comes to you from a chamber in which—with a triumph far transcend-

* Preached, December 1, 1861, on the Sabbath after the death of a beloved daughter, and written out afterwards for publication at the special request of many members of the Seventh Church.

ing all I had ever witnessed or read or imagined,—death was swallowed up in victory. During the last four days of her illness, the physicians assured me that my sainted child suffered the pangs of a hundred deaths; but her soul was filled with unutterable blessedness. While complying with the prescriptions of her medical attendants, she desired that no anodynes might be administered, lest they should affect her mind. "The cup that my Father hath given me," she said, "shall I not drink it? "My body suffers, but my soul is flooded with happiness." "I have no wish but to glorify God by my death."—"How ineffably precious is Jesus to me—how I love and adore him." After remarking that she had all her life been afraid to die, she repeated the words just read as our text, exclaiming, "Not a fear now, not a doubt; all is joy unspeakable and full of glory."

My beloved brethren, wherever I may be, I am still thinking of you; and I no sooner heard this last remark, than my mind reverted to you. I said, I will preach to them from those verses—I must seek to arm them with these defenses, these heavenly consolations against death.

The Apostle is speaking of the children of God. "Forasmuch then, as the children," the same "children" mentioned in the preceding verse. The Devil, who "hath the power of death," is careful not to alarm his victims; he disguises from them the formidable character of death. Hence philosophers, falsely so called libertines, duellists, men of the world, and worldly professors, can, like guilty Jonah, sleep on, regardless of their danger. The god of this world blinds their minds, lulls them into a repose which is only the smoothness of the cataract before it glides over the precipice; they die as the fool dieth.—The text refers to the children of God. Of them it declares that the tempter—by inspiring a dread of death—often impairs their joy, keeps them under a miserable bondage—literally, depresses them; and, that the incarnation and death of the Son of God ought to liberate them from this servile yoke, dispel their apprehensions, and cause them to rise to a triumphant superiority over all fear of death. Let us meditate upon a truth which

so deeply concerns each of us, and which is so full of consolation.

I. Sitting, as I have sat for several days and nights, looking death in the face, and seeing in that face only smiles, I asked myself, What then is it which renders this event so universally formidable? And the first answer was, The impenetrable veil which shrouds the future, the darkness which to sense and reason, hangs so gloomily over all beyond the grave. Love keeps its vigils at the bedside of one dearer to you than life. At this post of observation, you watch the insidious, inexorable progress of the disease. The fatal moment at length arrives.—You embrace your child, so beloved and cherished. You exchange the tenderest adieus. Gradually an invisible curtain descends between you and the object of these warm and yearning affections. In a moment a separation takes place, most mysterious and awful; there is a silence which no cries, no imploring appeals can break. Those lips which had just spoken to you in such endearing accents are sealed. The hands you still hold, and whose last pressure told you so much, are relaxed. The eyes which a moment before had beamed upon you with such heavenly softness are quenched. And the question breaks in on the heart with the power and earnestness of eternity—Is this the termination of life? or is there another, an immortal life, upon which the soul has entered?

And there is no question which can so agitate the human mind. Oh, this is no matter of cold abstract speculation. Every day it is pressing upon the inmost spirit of some mourner bending over the couch of death. Every day some Martha and Mary are shedding floods of tears for a brother, who had been to them friend, counsellor and protector. Every day some Joseph is mourning for his father with a lamentation so bitter that "the place is called Abel Mizraim;" some Rachel is weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted; some David is exclaiming, "O my son, my son, would God I had died for thee." Yes, each day, hour, minute, second, some human heart is cleft in twain; and pours its unavailing bursts of anguish, or sits in a silent agony more terrible than the most piercing shrieks and wailings. Now, need

I tell you that a heart thus bowed down cannot be satisfied with conjectures and peradventures. It needs solid, stable consolation; it requires a light from heaven to dissipate the obscurity of the future, a revelation from God to lift the veil and dispel all fear and misgiving.

I do not undervalue the arguments for an indestructible life which reason furnishes; and, as the subject is of such vast concern, I will indicate, in so many words, those which seem to me of most value.

First, we carry within ourselves the instinctive consciousness of a principle distinct from and infinitely superior to the material body. When you use your tongue to utter, or your fingers to write your thoughts, you know it is not the tongue nor the fingers which think; they are only the instruments employed by the mind, the spiritual faculty. We compare, reason, reflect, contrive, remember, hope, love; but it is palpably absurd to suppose that these are acts of our physical organization.—Now whether this spiritual principle shall live forever or be destroyed, depends entirely upon the will of God; and God has written upon our very nature some intimations of its immortal existence.

For he has impressed upon humanity, wherever it is diffused, a conviction of existence beyond the tomb. No nation has ever been discovered which did not cling to this faith. Whence this universal belief? That which has been held as certain by all men, everywhere and at all times, assuredly seems to be a truth either inscribed on the structure of the soul, or transmitted from an original revelation communicated at our creation.

Another fact. We are endowed by God with irrepressible aspirations and longings for a happiness which we know can never be attained in this life, for a happiness which is eternal. Is not this yearning a prophecy? The body has no appetites for which God has not provided; is it possible that this hungering and thirsting of the soul is never to be gratified? The future, like the past, is nothing to a brute, it lives only in the present. But man is a thinking being only as he forgets the present in the past and future. To him the present is comparatively little—the transcendant value of life—its happiness and dignity—is in memory and hope.

Hence the very idea of annihilation is overwhelming to him. He instinctively revolts at the very thought that memory, hope, reason, love ever can be destroyed. And it is a most instructive—I had almost said a conclusive fact, that this recoil from extinction, this instinct of endless duration, this anticipation of immortal life, becomes more articulate and stronger, just as the soul becomes holy;—that is, just as its views are clear, and its dictates and wishes in harmony with the will of God.

I know that, look where we will around us, the prospect is gloomy enough as to the perpetuation of life. The vegetable and animal creations are ever decaying and perishing. So, too, with human existence. "One generation passeth away and another cometh." The darkness, corruption, oblivion of the tomb swallow up race after race, and no trace of them remains. In all this, however, we see only "the dust returning to the dust from which it was taken." The Scriptures declare that "The spirit returns to God who gave it;" and to argue that, because material substances decay, therefore the soul must perish, is to overlook entirely the distinctions between matter and spirit.

Observe carefully any merely material development, and you will find that it soon attains its completion and then ceases. This is true of all vegetable growth, of all animal life, even of that noblest organism, the human frame. But the more the soul expands, the more it unfolds boundless powers of growth and expansion. Nay, the very properties of matter require that its increase should be soon arrested. If a tree should continue to grow, it would cast its shade over the land and prevent the growth of other trees. But the more the soul is enlarged, the more invigorating and blessed are the influences it exerts over other souls. Extend this thought into eternity, and you will feel something of the meaning of that expression, "the power of an endless life," the power of the soul to dilate its own divine faculties through eternity, and through eternity to diffuse happiness upon other souls. Ponder, too, another distinction between spirit and matter. The latter, when it decays, is not destroyed; it still exists, and passes into other,

often into higher forms. In nature nothing perishes, nothing is lost, every fragment is gathered up that there may be no waste. But if my mind, thought, reason, conscience, memory, hope, love of truth, of purity, of God, become extinct, there is utter and unutterable destruction. For these are peculiar to myself, and can never belong to any other being.

We are sometimes told of man's insignificance. But a being who can know himself, and lament his inferiority to his own standard of intellectual and moral perfection, cannot be insignificant. He is great—greater than the earth, greater than the stars, greater than the sun, greater than all the material universe; for the earth, the stars, the sun, the material universe are all unconscious of their own existence, nor can they conceive of, and aspire after higher and more splendid creations.

But man's guilt and depravity. Be it so. What then? This very consciousness of guilt is an intimation—a very strong intimation of immortality. For, if there were no future life, no judgment, no retribution after death, conscience could not exert its tremendous power. The sense of sin is terrible, because we feel that the consequences of sin are not exhausted here, that its real punishment will be inflicted hereafter.

Let me only add that the scenes often presented in the chambers of dying Christians furnish an evidence almost irresistible that the soul does not decay with the decay of the physical system. Those superhuman triumphs amidst convulsions of pain—those ineffable joys which transport the soul while disease and anguish shoot through every nerve and fibre of the material frame—those songs of exultation in the very moment when the body is dissolving—it is almost impossible to witness such a spectacle, without feeling that there is in man the germ of an imperishable existence, that he is destined by God for immortality.

I might multiply reflections like these. I do not pretend, however, that these arguments, with the addition of others, would establish a certainty. Still, if man is created for future and unwasting life, I would expect reason to give some intimation of this magnificent truth;

and I think we have enough to awaken presumption, expectation, a well founded hope.

But, my brethren—when just parted by death from one most loving, lovely, and beloved—presumption, expectation, hope will not do. "I hope there is something after death;"—this was all that the wisest and best of the ancient philosophers could say. But O, cruel consolation, excruciating conjecture, which soon remits the heart to the most agonizing doubts and apprehensions. No, no; guesses, peradventures, probabilities will not do; we need proof, assurance; let me have these, let the veil be removed; let me know certainly that the being so dear has been translated to a sphere of immortal life; and I am satisfied, I dry my tears; death is disarmed of this terror, death is but the beginning of a higher, sublimer existence, death is swallowed up in victory. Give me this assurance,———but who can give it to me?—Five hundred generations have passed into that shadowy land, but no messenger, no whisper has come back from the tomb. Worlds were little to barter for the certainty, but worlds cannot purchase it. I ask the earth, I conjure the skies, I weary the heights and torture the depths with my beseeching cries;—but earth and sky, heights and depths return only a cold, dead, chilling echo. Where, then, can assurance be obtained? Blessed be God, there is a teacher who perfectly ascertains every thing here. The Cross towers like a beacon between that dusky world and ours, irradiating each with celestial brightness. "By his death" Jesus delivers his children from all fear of falling back into nothing. He has "abolished death," (how energetically does the Apostle announce the very truth I am urging) "and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." The demonstration here is so simple that a child can comprehend it, and so irrefragable that I defy the acutest genius to detect a flaw or frame even a plausible objection.

For, if anything is incontestable, then without controversy, the death and resurrection of the Redeemer forever establish the truth of his doctrine. The proofs of that death and resurrection I need not here exhibit. If it were proper to convey such communications from this

place, I would make one remark, I would say that, in other days I was accustomed to sift evidence—to subject it to the severest cross examination; that I have scrutinized the testimony on this subject with a more critical jealousy for fear lest a religious education might have biased my mind; and that no fact in history rests upon more "rocky strength of foundation" than the Saviour's death and resurrection. On this great event, you remember, he staked the certainty of his doctrine. The Jews would not be convinced by his miracles, they demanded a sign. "Let him come down from the cross," they said, "and we will believe." He gives them more than they required. He enters the tomb, and emerges, "the resurrection and the life," on the third day. His doctrine, then, is forever established.

But, now, what is the Saviour's doctrine? It is, as we have already seen, the assertion of life and immortality. We said, just now that upon our very nature there is the impress of a future existence; and it is a striking fact, that Revelation takes for granted this irrepressible consciousness. Jesus never once enters into any argument, nor advances any proofs upon this subject. He speaks to man as a being who carries within him a light which had only become dim, and needed but to be trimmed and refreshed. He appeals constantly and directly to a spiritual principle in the human bosom; this he addresses clearly, solemnly, and with perfect confidence, knowing that his voice would find an instant response.

Another remark. The soul's immortality is taught by Jesus, not in any detached passages; it is a truth which underlies and pervades the whole of his religion. Much he promises to "the life which now is;" but it is "the life that is to come" which he constantly proposes, as the object of our devoutest aspirations. His disciples are not to fear them who can destroy only the body, but him who can cast soul and body into hell. They are to labor, not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life. They are not to lay up treasure on earth, but in heaven. They are not to expect rewards on earth, but in heaven. They are to welcome trials and sacrifices, that they may receive a kingdom prepared for them before the foundation of the

world. In short, all terrestrial pomps and charms are to be despised, and persecution, poverty, pain, dungeons, swords, scaffolds, fires, the most frightful martyrdoms are to be preferred to the pleasures of sin. And why all this? Why, because the soul is immortal, because the gain of the whole world would be no sort of equivalent for its loss.

And, oh! the earnestness with which the Saviour pressed this grand doctrine. Man's ignorance of God drew from him his bitterest tears, causing him to utter that wailing lamentation, "O, righteous Father, the world hath not known thee." But next to this dismal phenomenon, the spectacle which pierced his heart with the acutest anguish was man's neglect of his spiritual nature. He did not overlook the body; he sympathized with its wants and miseries. He fed it, healed its infirmities, cured its diseases, raised it from the tomb. But it was the soul—its imperial capacities—its magnificent endowments—above all, its eternal life—an existence which shall endure when worlds, stars, suns, shall have expired—it was this that absorbed his thoughts and kindled solicitudes indefatigable, inextinguishable; for this he pleaded with unutterable yearnings. His entire ministry—his sermons, his warnings, his entreaties, his tears—was a voice from heaven, proclaiming the immortality of the soul, and beseeching men to awake to a truth so solemn, glorious, consoling, rejoicing, inspiring.

My friends, I cannot tell how this subject affects you. Even in Christians the cry of the soul is stifled by the clamors of the world and the passions. Here, to-day, in the sanctuary itself, your spiritual discernments are so dull and darkened, that this truth excites scarcely an emotion in your minds. But in the chamber where death has just removed one most dear to you; kneeling beside the bed and gazing upon that form which had so long been the object of your tenderest affections; looking into that pale, sweet face, and feeling that for one word from those lips you would give all which life has or hopes for: there, oh, there, this doctrine is unspeakably precious. Close your eyes. Do not let your thoughts rest upon the casket, lovely as that is. The soul, the spirit—that

which was and is the being you loved—has been taken from this valley of tears, and has entered upon its true life. The angels who rejoiced over the repentance of this child of God experience new delights at her emancipation. Could she speak, she would say, in the language of Jesus, "Why seek you the living among the dead?" "If you loved me you would rejoice because I go to my Father." Shall not this assurance sweeten the bitterness of separation? Will you surrender yourself to convulsions of grief, and shed floods of tears, because the imprisoned spirit is set free and exults in everlasting life? Was it only yourself you loved, and the happiness you enjoyed in her society? If you truly loved her, could you mourn and weep, because she has ceased to see, as you see—through organs so limited in their vision—and now sees as she is seen by God? because she no longer knows as you know—with a knowledge which is only a sort of ignorance—but knows even as she is known? because she lives—not as we live—a few years of weakness, infirmity, sorrow, sin—but as God lives—expatiating in spiritual, celestial, immortal existence?

The first fearful trait about death is, the uncertainty as to the something, anything, after death; and you see how the Cross supplies such an antidote to these apprehensions, that it may be truly said, "Jesus Christ hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." I wish here to pause for a moment, and—as the matter is of infinite importance—to ask each of you with individual reference, whether you believe in this glorious doctrine? I know you will answer, To be sure I do, I never had a doubt of it. But if you have never known the misery of an earnest doubt, I am afraid you have never known the rapture of an earnest faith, as to this subject. There is no truth—not even the eternity of God—which, so nearly concerns us, none—if the mind can only be brought to dwell intently upon it—which can so overmaster our thoughts and effect such an entire change in all our feelings and estimates of things as this of our destiny to live forever. To rejoice in the full assurance of immortality, however, you must reflect; you must penetrate the folly of all those sophistries which

infidels can bring against it; you must take in the proofs which reason furnishes, and the demonstration which the Gospel supplies. "If a man die, shall he live again?" Never, in all my life, have I ever known any sort of scepticism as to this question; yet it seems to me I only believed that I believed. Would that I could impart to you the happiness, the triumphant assurance, the transports, with which I now rea ize its certainty and its magnificence.

II. Thus far our argument has supposed that man is innocent, and it fortifies us only against the fear of annihilation; but there is another and more awful terror in leaving this world. Man is a sinner. We have seen that he carries within him an instinct of his spiritual nature, and that Jesus constantly takes this for granted. Now his consciousness of guilt is still more clear, and the Saviour always deals with him as a being whose conscience leaves no room for denial or evasion on this point; he takes for granted man's inward sense of transgression and accountability after death for sin. This truth renders death formidable indeed, for the soul then passes into the presence of its Judge, and receives that sentence which fixes its destiny amidst the changeless retributions of eternity. And, now, what I say is, that by his death Jesus delivers his people forever and perfectly from all fear on this score. This is our second article. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying he shall never see death." "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law, but thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Men and brethren, for twenty-five years—ever since it pleased God to call me by his grace and to put me into the ministry—I have sought always and everywhere to preach Christ Jesus and him crucified. As a fact, as a doctrine, as the only foundation of hope, holiness, salvation, Christ has been to me "all and in all;" but never did my faith rest upon the atonement with such a perfect confidence, such a delightful recumbency as now rejoices my whole soul. Sitting beside that departed saint, and hearing her often exclaim, "Not a doubt, not a fear, all is

peace and joy and blessedness," I asked her, upon what she relied with such triumphant assurance? "I know, my dearest child," I said, "that 'many daughters have done virtuously, but you have excelled them all,' and members of the church have called and told me how they all loved you." She at once interrupted me. "Do not, my dear father, I beg you, utter one word about me. Speak only of Jesus, his blood and righteousness. I am a poor sinner saved by grace, who feels her unworthiness, and laments that, having so short a life, she did not devote it more entirely to such a Saviour." "How, then, is it that not a cloud, not a shadow is upon the brightness of your prospect?" "How?" she replied, looking up into my face with surprise, "How? did he not die for me? does not his blood cleanse from all sin?" Here she was convulsed by one of those paroxysms of agony which nearly suffocated her, during which I heard her murmuring in broken accents, "Father, not my will, but thine." As soon as it had passed, she remarked, with a smile of angelic sweetness, "These are only the throes of the poor body; the spirit is in perfect peace. For your sakes I hope God will spare me these spasms, for I see they overcome you; but for myself I scarcely feel them, such is the blessedness which fills my whole being till it runs over. I desire not a pang less than my Saviour sees good for me. He does all things well." And then, resuming her former theme, she said, "Washed in his blood, how can I doubt? Clothed in his spotless righteousnes, what can I fear? 'They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"

Our text ascribes the Christian's disenthrallment from fear to the "death of Jesus." Socinians tells us of his virtues, his miracles, his example; and if they refer to his crucifixion, it is only as the highest exhibition of disinterested love, or as a proof of the truth of his doctrine—bad reasoning, by the way, for a man's sealing his creed with his blood has nothing to do with its truth. A martyr convinces us of his sincerity, but more men have died for error than for truth. The Scriptures attribute the whole of salvation to the blood, the death of Christ. This fundamental truth, that his death was a

real satisfaction for sin, foolish men have denounced as a dogma utterly irrational. But—while the atonement is a mystery—the very mystery which the Apostle declares, "Eye had not seen, nor ear heard, neither had it entered into the heart of man,"—yet, of this great doctrine, as of immortality, I affirm, that reason and revelation speak with one voice.

Without at all discussing the inspired account of the Fall, it is a matter of palpable observation and experience, that man is a fallen being, that humanity is not in its normal and original purity, as it must have come from the hands of the Creator. Now—admitting this degeneracy—I can form no idea of the Deity which does not inspire the hope that he will interpose to rescue us from ruin, and restore us to his favor and his image.

More than that. Such an expectation is confirmed and raised almost to certainty by multiplied and most significant intimations, which I find in God's conduct towards our apostate world. For, if humanity be abandoned—if, in the divine contemplation, there had been no purpose of restoration, why has the race been continued? why are we the recipients of so many mercies? why so much pains—such care—so many heaven-appointed checks to restrain us from vice? why so many motives to impel us to virtue? why, amidst conscious guilt and ruin, has man always cherished such anticipations of an august deliverer, that Jesus is styled "The Desire of all nations," and the whole creation is represented as "groaning together," travailing in the pangs of a magnificent regeneration? When the old men wept as they remembered the gorgeousness of Solomon's temple, God assured them that the "glory of the latter house should be greater," because the Messiah would appear in its courts. And in man's very nature there is a gospel which, while he mourns his conscious degeneracy, inspires the noblest hopes of a salvation, which shall confer upon him a more abundant life than that received at creation—of a redemption to crown him with a glory far transcending that of Paradise.

And then see, too, how enlightened reason confesses and admires the harmony of this "great salvation" with

every attribute of the divine Being. In the satisfaction of Calvary, God's justice is satisfied; for, on the very theatre which had witnessed the dishonor of the law, that law is vindicated and magnified: God's holiness is satisfied; for Jesus does not save his people in sin, but from sin. In the Gospel scheme mercy is not a weakness —as it often is in human administrations,—it is the exercise of amazing love and compassion through an expedient which awfully asserts the inviolable majesty of Jehovah's moral government. In short, from the vicarious sufferings of the Son of God a fresh revenue of honor accrues to every perfection of the Deity. They are all blended into a belt of light, a zodiac of softened splendors, which illuminates the earth with joy, irradiates heaven with new raptures, and pours fresh adorable effulgence upon the divine character.

I was right, then, when I affirmed, not only that there is in the doctrine of the atonement nothing to shock my intellect, but that reason stands ready to welcome such a salvation as the only possible salvation for man—if indeed it be revealed. And is it not revealed? Is it not the great revelation of the Gospel? Is it not the Gospel, "the good news," "the glad tidings of great joy?" Upon this point I need not accumulate proofs from the sacred Oracles. Thank God, I am addressing a Christian church. You not only know the certainty of this "faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation," but you have gladly received it as the foundation of all your faith and hope. Let me only quote a single text, which I select because I am speaking of our deliverance from every apprehension as to the consequences of sin in eternity, and the passage occurs in precisely such an argument addressed by Paul to the Corinthians. "Moreover, brethren," these are his words, "I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, and wherein ye stand, by which also ye are saved." He is recapitulating, you observe, that Gospel which was the substance of all his preaching, the source of all piety to his hearers, and the only ground of salvation. Well, and what is that Gospel? "For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." This, then, is that Gospel. It is not that Christ died as a martyr, but that he "*died for our sins.*" There was an adequate object for that amazing phenomenon, the Lord of life and glory expiring upon the cross. "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree." "He who knew no sin was made a sin-offering for us." This is the Gospel; this is the revelation which Paul "received" from God; which is the burden of all the "Scriptures," —the adoring theme of patriarchs, prophets, apostles; and which, acting by inspiration, he delivered "*first of all,—predicated* as the great doctrine on which all evangelical truth rests,—as the only foundation of salvation which can be laid—the foundation which God has laid—and, building upon which, no man, no matter how multiplied and aggravated his guilt, can ever be disappointed.

Christ having died for our sins—having carried them with him up on the cross, down into the tomb,—and having "risen for our justification,"—his resurrection being the proclamation of heaven that a full satisfaction had been made,—the Holy Spirit assures us that those who believe in him cannot die in their sins. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Why not? Because in Christ they died, in Christ they rose, in Christ they perfectly satisfied the demands of justice. After this, how can a Christian have a single doubt or fear? Ah, I know the tempter sometimes exerts all his malignity in that trying moment when the child of God is enfeebled by disease, when flesh and heart are failing. Satan is branded by inspiration as "the accuser of the brethren." And never is he more subtle and malicious than when he employs what the Apostle designates as the "power of death;" when he assails the mind during its conflict with the last enemy, arraying before the memory all the sins of the past, and seeking to fill the conscience with alarms. But, let the Christian only remember "whom he has believed;" let him turn from these suggestions of his own faithlessness and vileness, and fix his eyes upon the Cross. One single look there will be enough; all terror will in-

stantly vanish; heavenly peace, assurance, joy, will settle down upon his soul.

To his prophet Zachariah, God disclosed a vision which is full of consolation for us. "And he showed me Joshua, the high priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist (accuse) him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee. Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered, and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord stood by." Here, even in the presence of the Angel of the covenant, the devil appears, and the High Priest himself is charged with defilement. Nor can the man of God repel the impeachment; for, in the light of God's countenance, all his righteousnesses are only as filthy apparel. But there was one who could silence the accuser; and who at once dispels the alarm and confusion of his servant, by assuring him that he was a brand plucked by sovereign grace from the burning, that all his iniquity was taken away, that he should receive white garments and a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, would give him.

III. The last mournful and fearful thing in death is the parting of all sublunary ties, the disruption of those cords which had so long and closely bound us to the earth. In this view death is a shipwreck of all our affections, associations, possessions, prospects, hopes and joys. Everything near and dear to us is comprehended in that word *Life*. Death rends us away from existence, and seems to consign its victims to a darkness and sterility only the more dismal by their contrast with the brightness and redundancy of life in the world around us;—a

thought this, that explains the peculiar sadness with which, amidst the dazzling beauties of Spring, the heart recalls the images of those whom it misses. In this aspect death appears especially gloomy. In this aspect the Gospel is especially rich in revelations which rob the grave of its terrors. But it is just in this view of death, and of the power of the Cross to raise the Christian above every fear and inspire the most glorious anticipations, that a preacher feels the utter inadequacy of all human thought and language.

I have told you that, during the days and nights which it pleased God to allow me to spend in that chamber so filled with heavenly manifestations, my thoughts turned to you. And, last Sabbath, at this very hour, you were thinking of me, your prayers were ascending for me. My beloved brethren, those supplications were not in vain.—It was then, above all, that the soul of my child was ravished with illapses of celestial joy which seemed too much for her to bear, that the hearts of all who were present burned within them, and their eyes overflowed with tears of wonder, love and adoration. "This light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." "My soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord."—"I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in me." "My whole being is flooded with unutterable blessedness." "I rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." These are some of the passages she repeated again and again; but I can give you no idea of the tones of her voice trembling with delight, of the rapture which shone in her eyes, of the angelic light which suffused her whole countenance. All this was only a faint morning twilight breaking in through the decaying tenement of clay,—only a few feeble rays falling upon a form racked with pain. What, then, must the noontide torrents of glory be to the emancipated spirit exulting in immortal vigor.

We see one dear to us depart in peace, we are assured of the soul's higher, everduring life, and we know that sin has been expiated; but how irrepressible are our

yearnings to penetrate the unseen world and learn something of its economy? That thinking, rejoicing being, which was here but a moment since, where is it now? what is it now? She, so long and intimately present with me, so recently conversing with me, how does she now exist? with what society does she now mingle? what are her employments? how does she communicate with other spirits? what are her thoughts, feelings, enjoyments?—All that I so long to know, she is this instant experiencing. Would that some voice would solve the problem; that some glimpse could dart upon my mind.

Reclining on her Saviour's bosom, at "the very gate of heaven,"—I use her own words,—not at the outside of the gate where Jacob lay and angels could reach him only by a ladder, but inside among the angels,—my daughter again and again said to us, "Would that I had words to utter what I feel, but it is as unspeakable as it is full of glory." In short, the Holy Spirit tells us that "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." And, now, if this be so, of course I can only impair the surpassing grandeur of the subject by attempting to say anything upon it.

However,—as the text declares that we know enough of heaven to dissipate all gloomy images of death,—let me stammer out a thought or two; thoughts which are not mine, but which God has revealed to us by his Spirit. Let me falter out some of these ideas, and, then, let me ask how it is that Christians can ever speak of losses, disruptions, separations at death? how we can be so unbelieving as to afflict ourselves—so selfish as not to rejoice, when one we love has escaped from this vale of sorrow, and passed to the full fruition of such "glory, honor and immortality."

Regard death as a repose from all which makes life a sea of troubles, a ceaseless struggle with fears without and fightings within; from all that causes the heart to faint and tempts the spirit to rebel. "There the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." "There remaineth a rest for the people of God,"—rest from sin, temptation, affliction, disappointment, fear, pain, sickness, all infirmities of the body, the mind, the spirit.

Regard death as an emancipation from all the gross appetites of the body,—from all those passions, those "fleshly lusts which war against the soul,"—and as the full gratification of all the boundless longings of the spirit after the "beauties of holiness," after perfect transformation into the image of God. "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." "As for me I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness." "And they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto fountains of living water. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes;"———all tears of sorrow,—but, O Lamb of God, Redeemer of my soul, never shalt thou wipe away the tears of love and gratitude with which I will wash those feet once pierced with cruel nails for me.

Consider death as the translation of the purified spirit from the darkness which now clouds its vision, into the clear azure radiance which bathes and ravishes the "saints in light." "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign forever and ever." "The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.

View death as the final and complete overthrow of all our spiritual enemies;—as the hour in which we shall be "more than conquerors through him that loved us,"—in which we shall everlastingly triumph over the world, over those inward foes whose treacherous power conspires against our salvation, over "the last enemy" himself. This conflict finished, the Christian will exclaim, "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ;" the whole field will then be clear, nothing will be left which can ever molest or make him afraid; his soul will expatiate through eternity, and find only immortal life and glory. "After this I beheld, and

lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence come they? And I said, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." "And they overcame by the blood of the Lamb."

Contemplate death as the investiture of the child and heir of God with the full reversion of glory from which he had been so long debarred in this house of his bondage. To convey some idea of this glory, inspiration has heaped up and exhausted all glowing and dazzling imagery.—We are told of a city whose streets are gold;—of rivers of water pure as crystal;—of the walls of the city resplendent with the mingled effulgence of diamonds, amethysts, sapphires, every radiant jewel, with the illumination of all gems;—of a building so magnificent that God alone could be its architect, rearing and garnishing it with all the exuberance of celestial skill and affluence;—of regal sceptres, diadems, thrones;—of a glory which shall cause cherubim and seraphim forever to gaze upon the saints and to "admire in them" the matchless beauties of the Redeemer himself;—of a glory, an exceeding glory, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;—of the mediatorial glory of the Son of God in whose victorious honors all the ransomed shall share, being glorified together with him, "sitting with him in his throne even as he sits in his Father's throne."

We speak of the bitter separations caused by death; and to the living they are bitter, heart rending. But think of the society into which the soul is then introduced. Here, how unsatisfying are all our friendships; how impossible, even in the dearest associations, to find perfect congeniality and sympathy; how foolish to apply the term *permanent* to unions so easily impaired, and which, however sincere, must to-morrow be dissolved. In heaven we shall experience all the delights of the

purest love, of the most tender intimacies, of the divinest communications, of harmonies which Jesus declares shall be as ineffable and eternal as those between him and his Father. "Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to the spirits of the justified made perfect."

I had just repeated this glowing passage to my dying child, when, lifting her eyes to heaven, she at once said, "Yes, and oh, to him, to him, to Jesus." Take in that thought. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am;" death accomplishes this prayer, death wafts me to the arms of my Redeemer. Who can conceive the rapture of that meeting—the eternity of blessedness concentrated in that first embrace? There he is! that Jesus in whom I believed; in whom—when I saw him not—I rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory. My beloved is now mine, and I am his forever; nor can height, nor depth, not length, nor breadth ever again separate me from this "fairest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely,"—ever again interrupt the seraphic ardors which absorb my soul.

Nor only this outward and ravishing beauty of the divine "Mediator of the new covenant." Death bears the purified spirit "to God;" reveals the glories of the Godhead spiritually, directly, clearly. This is the beatific vision—the soul's highest delight, its perfection in knowledge, sanctity, love, bliss. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them."

But I shall never have done; and after having said all, I would feel that I had said nothing—that I had only faltered out some imbecilities and incoherencies. However, these incoherencies and imbecilities are not rhapsodies, they are—to employ the Apostle's idea—the inarticulate lispings of a child who catches some glimpses of the excellent glory vouchsafed by the Holy Spirit, but can

neither comprehend nor utter what he feels. And, now enter if you can—enter as well as you can—into these thoughts, unite them, give full plumage to your faith, let imagination transport you to those abodes of purity, love, and blessedness. After this, come back to earth, and say to yourself,—My friend, my father, my mother, my wife, my child has passed from a world of sorrow, and is now in full possession of all this felicity, comprehends all this felicity, experiences all these joys, raptures, ecstasies; and will be entranced with new, ever increasing joys, raptures, ecstacies, while the ages of eternity roll on.

For my part, I am overwhelmed by the reflection, that for man, for sinners, such things have been prepared by God. If a single shadow could dim the triumphant exultation of my soul, it would be a doubt whether such a destiny can indeed be ours. But eternal truth dissipates all doubt. God's word dispels every fear and gives an assurance as immovable as his throne. On every page of this volume I find the certainty of these things forever settled. Above all, when I fix my eyes upon the Cross, I glory in a faith which "is the substance"—the unequivocal evidence—of these unseen realities. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? What treasures can God's wealth possess, God's love bestow, which are too rich after such a donation? "If children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." Yes, "all things are ours, whether life, or death, things present, or things to come, all are ours;" and ours by no foreign conveyance, no doubtful claim, but indefeasibly, by the most amazing title, by our new birthright; ours because we are the children and heirs of God.

And now what shall I say to these things? My soul, if these truths are unmeaning sounds to thee, if they do not inspire the noblest gratitude and joy, the fault is thine own; thou art "loading thyself with thick clay," thou art debasing thyself in the pursuit of "lying vanities," and forgetting a heritage which turns the whole earth into contempt. After this, shall death be formidable to me? "Who does not long for that city, out of

which no friend departs, into which no enemy enters?* And when one I love has been mercifully removed from this scene of tribulation to those mansions of glory, can I wish to bring her back again? We speak of death as a gloomy valley—ah, radiant gloom, brightened by her Saviour's presence, through which angels bore her rejoicing spirit up to the bosom of her God. We mourn the loss she has suffered in death;—inestimable loss by which she has gained "an inheritance among the saints in light." We represent death as a shipwreck;—blessed shipwreck, which has rescued her from all the storms, surges, fears, sufferings of a weary voyage, and stranded her soul upon "an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

But it is time to finish. My friends, God declares that when he afflicts a pastor, it is "for your consolation and salvation." Upon some of you, all my preaching from this desk and from house to house, all my exhortations and tears have been fruitless; shall my repeated sorrows also be in vain? Is it not high time to awake out of sleep and come to Christ, that he may give you life? Twice, and in quick succession, have my afflictions appealed to the young in this congregation, and admonished them that death envies those who seem to bid fairest for many years. I implore the young not to despise these touching, piercing calls from eternity, but to cast themselves upon the Saviour and receive the mercy he offers. Some of you are advanced in life; is it not unutterable infatuation to put away the thought of death, and, while "gray hairs are here and there upon you," still to neglect so great salvation? All of you, all of you, before it shall be forever too late, be warned, be wise. This immortality is yours; will you make it an immortality of darkness and despair? To you, all the exceeding riches of Christ's atonement, all the glory and blessedness of heaven are freely proffered; will you reject them, and plant thorns in your dying pillow, and precipitate yourselves into abysses of everlasting misery?

* "Quis non desideret illam civitatem, unde amicus non exit, quo inimicus non intrat?"—*Augustine.*

But I have no heart to-day for such gloomy thoughts. Christians, my dearly beloved brethren, I turn to you. Would that I could make you feel this subject as I do; after all, however, if you are Christians, the truths you have heard are to you the realities of faith. And, now, is it not deplorable that you still regard death as most of you do? that—while in the New Testament death is constantly represented as a consummation "far better" than life; while the first Christians had "a desire to depart and be with Christ;" while they were "ever looking for, and hasting to, the coming of the Son of God;" while they habitually viewed the body as only "the tent" * in which the soul tarries a few days, and rejoiced in the certainty that as soon as the tabernacle should be taken down the soul would enter into "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" while they groaned, earnestly desiring to exchange this temporary abode for celestial mansions, for royal garments in the skies; while they longed that "mortality should be swallowed up in life"—the mortal life be merged in the immortal;———is it not lamentable, that, while these aspirations glowed in their bosoms, and these prospects filled them with rapture, we feel none of the sublime attractions of the tomb, the grave appears to us thronged with dreadful aspects, we shrink from death as the direst calamity, anticipate it as a sad necessity, compared with which the weariest and most wretched earthly life is a sort of paradise. How is it, that our theology, our sermons, our prayers, our very hymns are all wrong as to a matter of such infinite importance?

Alas, the reason is too manifest. We have no realizing sense of our immortality. We plunge into the world, and are so absorbed by its cares and projects, that eternal life is to us only an empty idea. We do not meditate upon the Cross and its soul subliming revelations, and hence do not glory in it, nor experience its power to lift us above all fear of condemnation. We drive hard after earthly pleasures, riches, honors, devote no time to heavenly contemplations, and thus debase our spiritual

*II Corinthians v: 1—5.

capacities, and avert our eyes from the pleasures, riches, honors reserved for us beyond the skies.

I beseech you, I adjure you, let not the afflictions of a pastor who loves you with his whole heart be lost upon you. If you frustrate the gracious purpose of God towards you in these strokes, under which my heart bleeds, he may send others upon me, and "break me with breach upon breach." Have pity upon me, O, my friends, and spare me, "lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow." But recollect, if your pastor's afflictions will not do, God may turn his hand upon you, and chasten you in his sore displeasure, and heap desolation upon your hearths.

At all events, sickness, sorrow, death must one day enter your habitations. Prepare to meet them. Ponder the truths to which you have listened, that you may be armed for the trying hour. I bow my knees to the Father of mercy, that your dear children may be continued to you; but O, give yourselves no rest, give God no rest, day nor night, until they be all gathered to Jesus;—that so, if they should be taken, you may know the unspeakable solace which sweetens my otherwise overwhelming bereavements, and without which grief would bury itself in the depths of my heart and consume all my life.

I feel that there has been much which is personal in this discourse, but I know you will bear it with indulgence. The thoughts and emotions which, while I sat in that glorified chamber, exalted my soul to heaven in the consciousness of new and ravishing manifestations of the Redeemer "in me,"—and which have vainly struggled for utterance here to-day, may appear to you too hallowed for such a public communication. They at first seemed to me as revelations which, like Mary, I ought to "keep and ponder in my own heart." But the more I have mused on them, the more has the fire burned, and the more have I been compelled to speak with my tongue. "What I shew you in secret," says Jesus, "that speak ye in the light; what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye on the house tops." And, now, why should I not open to you all my heart, and tell you, that

the last Thursday was the only real thanksgiving day I ever passed in my life. It was, you remember, the day appointed for the public acknowledgment of mercies received from God. Its early dawn found me beside the couch upon which lay, in all the surpassing loveliness of death, that form so long and tenderly cherished. There I sat "in bitterness for my first-born," but serene with heavenly consolations—feeling that heaven was only an apartment of my own house, in which she was waiting for me; and there the tempter dared to intrude, and to profane even the sanctity of that shrine with his loathsome suggestions. Yes, he whispered, this is thanksgiving day; and you at least ought to observe it with devout gratitude; for the God you worship has loaded you with benefits. Without any fault of yours, nay in spite of your earnest efforts, the country you love is rent by civil war. Your dear native State has been invaded. The place of your birth, the scenes of your childhood and youth, are laid waste. Your earliest friends, all who have cherished you and been endeared to you from your infancy, are driven as exiles from their old ancestral homes, and the temple in which you first preached Jesus is hung in sackcloth. You, too, are reduced to comparative poverty; and, in a few brief months, blow after blow has beat relentlessly upon your heart, and torn from you those in whom your life was bound up. You, at least, ought to adore the tender mercies of your God to-day. He has been very good to you.———With such infernal thoughts was my soul insulted by the arch enemy of God and man; but oh! the peace of God which passeth all understanding, the gratitude and joy which overflowed in gushing tears, as I turned away, and exclaimed, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name." And all day long that psalm made melody in my heart; and "in the night that song was with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life." Yes, I then knew all that David could have experienced, when he said, "Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live; I will lift up my hands in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips,

when I remember thee upon my bed, and think on thee in the night watches."

Be prepared, my brethren, for the hour when your homes shall become houses of mourning; be prepared to meet death yourselves. "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." Study carefully the text upon which I have attempted to preach to you, replenish your minds with its exhaustless consolations, and supplicate the aids of the Spirit whose office it is to "take of the things of Christ and shew them unto us." Life and immortality,—take in all the glory of these words. The mansions to which Jesus has gone, to which those so dear to you have passed, and the attractions of which you now feel,—let those mansions be kept steadily in view. Above all, ascend Mount Calvary, and make its summit the Pisgah of your souls. Live near the Cross, in contrite confession of sin, in simple childlike faith, in adoring gratitude, in reverential sympathy with that amazing mystery of love, that altar and that sacrifice.

Ah! I shall soon be dying,
  Time swiftly glides away;
But on my Lord relying,
  I hail the happy day.

The day when I must enter
  Upon a world unknown,
My helpless soul I venture
  On Jesus Christ alone.

He once, a spotless victim
  Upon Mount Calvary bled,
Jehovah did afflict him,
  And bruise him in my stead.

Hence, all my hope arises,
  Unworthy as I am,
My soul most surely prizes
  The sin-atoning Lamb.

To him by grace united,
  I joy in him alone,
And now, by faith delighted,
  Behold him on his throne.

There he is interceding
For all who on him rest,
The grace from him proceeding
Shall waft me to his breast.

Then, with the saints in glory,
The grateful song I'll raise,
And chant my blissful story,
In high seraphic lays.

Free grace, redeeming merit,
And sanctifying love,
Of Father, Son and Spirit,
Shall charm the courts above.

Sermon Fourteenth.

PROSPERITY and ADVERSITY.

"I spake unto thee in thy prosperity, but thou saidst, I will not hear. This hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice."—JEREMIAH xxii: 21.

"When he slew them then they sought him; and they returned and enquired early after God; and they remembered that God was their rock and the High God their Redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues."—PSALM xxviii: 34, 35, 36.

IF God is ever irresistible to an ingenuous heart, it is when he suspends his awful authority, condescends to reason with guilty man, and to complain of his ingratitude and obduracy. On more than one occasion he thus addresses us, and always in language exceedingly pathetic.

"Hear ye now what the Lord saith. Arise, contend before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel." At a proclamation like this, at the thought of such a cause, such an audience, such an adversary, the mind becomes agitated, the conscience frightened; already the earth seems to heave, the ocean to toss its angry surges, the mountains to burn with fire, the stars in their courses to marshal their glittering hosts, and the sun to collect his beams into a focal blaze, that they may fight against us. And we exclaim, "Will he plead against me with his great power? he is not a man as I am that I should answer, and we should come together in judgment. Though I were righteous, yet would I not answer, but I would make supplication to my judge." "Let not God

speak unto us lest we die." But calm your fears. It is not as an enemy, but as a friend wounded by our unkindness, that God invites us to this interview. He appears, not to overwhelm us with his justice, but in love and tenderness he says, "O my people what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me." So, in another affecting appeal to all nature, animate and inanimate, it is not an insulted sovereign, but a wronged and injured Father who speaks. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken. I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

In each of the passages just announced as our text, God touchingly expostulates with us as to our conduct to him. In the former he complains, that when he blesses and prospers us we repel his counsels. In the latter he upbraids us with the perfidiousness of vows and reformations which only mock him when he chastens us. I ask your attention to truths so calculated to humble us in penitential sorrow, and, at the same time, to inspire gratitude and love towards him who doth not willingly afflict the children of men, but in all his dealings seeks our "profit that we may be partakers of his holiness."

I. When God would give the prophet Ezekiel an emblem of his providence, he showed him a "wheel within a wheel, and the spirit of the living creatures in the wheels;"—thus declaring that, while all events are ordered by his direct interposition, much must be inscrutable; and that his purposes move on by revolutions. This applies not only to his economy in those great "events which shape the growing stature of the world," but to the history of families and individuals; for their fortunes, like the spokes of a wheel, are ever alternating —now culminating, now subsiding to the ground. And we begin by glancing at prosperity and its dangers.

"In thy prosperity;"—nor is there one in this assembly to whom this language may not be addressed. There is not one of you all who has not received a thousand bless-

ings from the hand of God. He breathed into your nostrils the breath of life, and from the cradle to this hour he has nourished and brought you up. For you he formed the earth, garnishing it with beauty; and for you he spread the heavens, kindling in them the sun and moon and stars. The curious mechanism of your body, with its exquisite contrivances all so beneficently framed to communicate sensations of pleasure; the heart with all its flooding tides of love and hope and joy; the mind with its mysterious world of thoughts, fancies, imaginations; these are his gifts, the tokens of his care. Then, too, his ever wakeful parental kindness hath been about your path, and about your bed by day and by night. Forsaken by him you would have been overwhelmed in hopeless misery; nay, you would long since have sunk into the depths of eternal perdition; but goodness and mercy have followed you all the days of your life. And "in thy prosperity,"—when health bounded along your veins and mantled in your cheeks,—when your soul rioted in cheerfulness,—when your plans and hopes had been crowned with success,—when your home was the abode of happiness, and morning and evening your board and your hearth laughed with the presence of all you loved;—no sorrow, no sickness, no death, no bitter missing:—"in thy prosperity," when all was sunshine and gladness, and it seemed, not that you would "die in your nest," but that you would live in your nest forever;—then, "in thy prosperity, I spake unto thee."

Whether we be in prosperity or adversity, God is ever speaking to us, Jesus still stands at the door and knocks. Nor does he only knock, he speaks. And now, what does God say to us in our prosperity? what are the lessons he seeks to impart by his providence, his word, his Holy Spirit? Listen, I am going to tell you.

And, first, in the day of prosperity God's Love speaks to us; speaks to us of love and gratitude. By goodness and mercy the most affectionate of fathers appeals to our hearts, seeking to reach and melt and win them. He says, "My son, give me thy heart." He whispers, "With loving kindness have I drawn thee."

The apostle urges with great earnestness a remonstrance of most awful yet touching import. He says, "*Thinkest thou this, O man, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*" Men of this world, absorbed in the cares and calculations of business, can you be careless of your immortal interests? Can you forget the sentence which rests upon you for sin, and that except you repent you must perish? Votaries of ambition, mad upon your idols, intoxicated by a delirious fury after the honors of this earth, can you despise the honor which God gives? can you brave the shame and everlasting contempt to which you must awake, except you repent? Sons and daughters of frivolity and fashion, can you dance the giddy round of folly, and banish the thought that the pleasures of sin are but for a season; that for all these things God will bring you into judgment, and that then these delights will augment the anguish of eternity, except you repent?

Yes, though judgment linger, it will come. All must repent or perish; and by his mercies God seeks to bring us to repentance. He has other means which he might employ, but they are his "strange work;" he prefers to recall us to himself by goodness. Hence, although no thought can conceive the hatred with which he regards the least sin, he follows with mercies those who hourly insult him with their crimes; causing his sun to shine on the evil as on the good, sending his rain upon the just and the unjust. Though his word and our very nature teach us how abominable ingratitude must be in his eyes, he yet multiplies blessings upon those who requite all with contempt. Not by commands addressed to our fears, but by a thousand marks of affectionate bounty, he seeks to form a friendship with us. And as we love and honor our parents because they are the authors of our life and on account of their devoted care of us through all the helplessness of childhood,—so he would awake in our souls sentiments of duty, of filial, reverential affection toward him as our Father in heaven.

In the day of prosperity God's wisdom speaks to us; speaks of heavenly wisdom; counsels us to improve the

blessings we enjoy, that our wealth may secure the true riches, our prosperity may ensure everlasting rewards.—Not by bare authority, but by favors which "are new every morning," our heavenly Father seeks to soften and subdue our hearts, that thus to temporal he may add spiritual blessings. He wishes to win our gratitude, that we may devote ourselves cordially and nobly to his service; that we may not only love him but be like him in diffusing happiness around us. He says, "Freely ye have received, freely give." God is no churl, no foe to any rational pleasure; he gives all things richly to enjoy; gives not only bread to satisfy our hunger, but fruits with their delicious juices, and flowers arrayed in every beautiful hue and exhaling every fragrant perfume. He scatters wide, with an almost lavish hand, provisions not only for our wants, but for our tastes and sensibilities. And he says, "In the day of prosperity be joyful." He would have all creation bid you rejoice. The sun, the trooping stars, the trees and shrubs in your gardens, the waving treasures of your fields, the abundance of your storehouses, the rich returns of commerce, the precious metals from under the earth, the sparkling stream, hill and valley and variegated landscape, the winds, the waves, all creation—he would have all repeat that exhortation, "Be joyful." But it ought to be joy in the Lord,—the joy of a grateful heart which daily exclaims, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord." O Lord, truly I am thy servant, bound to thee by a thousand mercies, and bound to thee forever.

I will only add, that in our prosperity the faithfulness of God speaks to us, and warns us of the dangers to which we are exposed. Alas that it should be so, but so it is, that the more we are blessed, the more are we prone to forget God, to forsake the fountain of living waters, and to hew out for ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns. This is a truth which all must admit; and can there be a more deplorable proof of our depravity? "I am come to talk with you," said Mr. Cecil to one of his parishioners, "I am alarmed for you since I have heard of your affairs."—"Alarmed!" answered the man in surprise, "why, sir, I

never was so prosperous in my life." "That is what I have heard," replied the pastor, "and it is that which makes me uneasy about you." It was not a man struggling with adversity, but a man in the palmy flood-tide of success, the silence of whose chamber was smitten with those words, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee, then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Nor can a devout man look anywhere in the world or the church, without trembling for those around whose souls prosperity is spreading its fatal snares, its unsearchable seductions.

"In thy prosperity I spake unto thee;" and what is the treatment of which God complains? It is that all his entreaties and admonitions are repelled. "In thy prosperity I spake unto thee, but thou saidst, I will not hear thee." This is the charge, and its justice is only too readily established by your own daily observation.

For of all those whose sincere conversion to Jesus you have ever known, how many have traced their conversion to prosperity? Thousands are now in the church, and a cloud of unseen witnesses compasses us about, each of whom exclaims, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes;" did you ever know one who, reviewing the way in which the Lord called him by his grace, could say, It is good for me that I have never known affliction and sorrow? You see constantly the noblest examples of piety among those who are poor and obscure in society; how many of these did you ever find equally devoted, when they had risen to wealth and honor? I do not deny that such miracles are sometimes wrought, but are they not the rarest of miracles? Does not Jeshuran kick as soon as he waxes fat? Does the poor widow continue to cast in all she hath, when she suddenly becomes heir to a fortune? In the circle of your acquaintance can you name twenty, can you name ten, five—do you know two who, when thus elevated, have not furnished sad commentaries on that prayer, "Give me not riches, lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord?" To the church at Smyrna Jesus said, "I know thy works and tribulation and poverty; thou art rich;" but the Laodiceans, who were "rich

and increased in goods," be found to be "poor and blind and naked." Look around you in this city. What is the preaching, what the church which the rich and prosperous select? What sort of religion do they prefer? What is the temper with which they listen to the humbling, crucifying truths of the Bible? And among those thus seeking in the house of God an incense more flattering to their vanity than that which is offered in their own sumptuous mansions, are some who were once zealous, self-immolating Christians; some, alas, too many, who would have triumphed over persecution, who would have braved dungeon and scaffolds for the truth, but whose faith could not withstand prosperity, who have fallen pitiful victims to the temptations of pride, fashion, ostentation and luxury.

The language of our text is very emphatic: "Thou saidst, *I will not hear thee.*" The man who had bought only "a piece of ground," and he who had "bought five yoke of oxen," and he who had "married a wife,"—these all quieted their consciences by framing excuses; but in the heyday of prosperity no apology is vouchsafed to God, he is at once instantly and insolently repelled. Inspiration employs every form of metaphor to convey some conception of the potency of God's voice. "The voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is full of majesty, the voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon, it maketh Sirion to skip like a young unicorn, it divideth the flames of fire, it shaketh the wilderness, it maketh the forests bare." A single word from God created all things, and can annihilate all things in a moment. "By it the heavens and all their hosts were made." "He spake and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast." There is in the whole universe but one being who spurns that voice; it is man, and he spurns it most contemptuously when God's bounty loads him with blessings. "Thou saidst, *I will not hear thee;*"—every feeling, every passion rising up and in hardness and defiance shutting out the hated intruder. "And this has been thy manner from thy youth." This haughty resistance begins with the prosperous in childhood and becomes every year more inveterate and desperate.

The first passion which prosperity nourishes and inflames is an absorbing love of the world; and I need not tell you with what distinctness this lust says to God, "I will not hear thee." My friends, you know the language of the sacred oracles upon this subject. They charge us not to be conformed to this world. Over and over they say, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him; for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." They declare that "the friendship of the world is enmity against God." In short, they affirm that true faith overcomes the world; that the disciple of Jesus is not of the world; and that in his prayers, purposes, efforts, and at least in some actual progress, the Cross crucifies the world to the Christian, and the Christian to the world.

But now, unless grace interposes most victoriously, you know what is the influence of prosperity; the supremacy it gives to the empire of the world, to its friendships, maxims, fashions, examples, spirit. To those who are in prosperity, vainly does a preacher address the most solemn admonitions. The more eloquently he inveighs against the things of the world, the more eagerly do they put forth an invisible hand to draw in closer to them and to grasp more tenaciously the objects of their darling passions. Elevated to the summit of prosperity, they exclaim, "It is good to be here," and spurn impatiently that voice which warns them of hereafter.

The second passion which prosperity pampers is inordinate self-love; and most energetic is the tone in which this vice rejects the counsels of the Most High, and says to him, "I will not hear thee."

Self abnegation is, as you all know, the very essence of the religion of Jesus. "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself;" and the holiest Christian, after twenty, thirty years' conflict, still finds that this duty requires him to watch and pray without intermission.—After having seemed to be finally triumphant, the servant of God is humbled in the dust at finding himself again deceived and defeated. He is at times almost disheart-

ened, and begins to complain that the promised succors are not afforded him, that the Gospel is not faithful to its engagements, and that he will be left, after all, to perish.

Such—so arduous and protracted—is the struggle in which the faithful soul is compelled to engage and re-engage with that selfishness which, in one or other of its diversified forms, is the ruling passion of the human heart. And now what is the effect of much prosperity upon this lust the great omniscient discerner of our thoughts has told us. Perfectly did Jesus know what is in man when, in portraying the votary of this world in the midst of success, he represents him as wholly engrossed with himself, as saying, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for thyself; eat, drink, and be merry."—Myself!—my ease, my gratification, to shun whatever can trouble or humble me, to secure whatever will flatter my taste and promote my pleasure and aggrandizement,—there, that is the end and aim of life. You remember this parable, my brethren; and there is another parable equally instructive. I mean that of the rich man who "lifted up his eyes in hell, being in torment." You have probably eluded the warning of the Saviour, by branding Dives as a bloated glutton, who revelled in luxury and despised the poor. But undeceive yourselves. Jesus does not condemn this opulent citizen for living and dressing in a style which his wealth allowed, nor does he breathe a word about his cruelty to the poor. Indeed those who have travelled in the East know that it is regarded as one of the highest evidences of benevolence, if the owner of a noble mansion permits beggars to sit at his door and receive alms from his visitors. Which of you would tolerate such a nuisance? The guilt of this sybarite was a life of self indulgence, of elegant ease, of refined pleasures, of effeminate gratification, which is almost as much opposed to the Gospel as a life of gross sensuality. When the apostle speaks of those who are the "enemies of the cross of Christ," let us recollect that he refers not to the doctrine of the cross, but to the crucifixion of self which the cross demands, without which our faith is dead, our orthodoxy only the most deceitful of all heresies.

The third passion which prosperity fosters, and which impiously contemns God, is pride. In the Bible this vice is everywhere marked as the prolific source of enmity to God, and as the object of Jehovah's especial abhorrence. "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God." "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly; but the proud he knoweth afar off," keeps him at a distance and beholds in him a deadly foe.

But, now, the influence of great worldly success upon this temper is proverbial. "Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded;" but unless Omnipotence gives effect to our ministry, we might as well go the sea shore and charge the chafing, roaring floods to stay their proud waters. Everything conspires to swell the heart of the prosperous man. "He is not in trouble as other men, neither is he plagued like other men; therefore pride compasseth him about as a chain, violence covereth him as a garment." A pensioner on God's bounty, he never gives a thought to the author of the blessings he enjoys, but glories in the consciousness of an insane independence. Loaded with a thousand infirmities, the object of God's detestation, he yet finds all those around him, even the children of heaven, doing him homage; and he says, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?" I wish to carry a high head; who is the Lord that I should hear him when he commands me to "esteem others better than myself?" I wish to destroy the fortunes and characters of my neighbors, and to rise upon their ruins; who is the Lord that I should regard his voice when he says, "Love thy neighbor as thyself?" I have amassed wealth, my own power hath gotten me riches; who is the Lord that I should respect his authority when he claims my possessions as his gifts, and undertakes to hold me to account for the use of them;—I love flattery; for though neither I nor my parasites believe these adulations, yet one must be of importance when people will stoop to falsehoods in order to please him. All this may be condemned by God; but who is he that, to obey him, I should cease to seek a gratification so delicious to my vanity? Does he wish to monopolize for himself all the praise and applause of the earth?

There are other evil passions which quicken and become rank in the hot-bed of prosperity, but I cannot dwell upon them. Let me only remark that they all "rebel against God, and contemn the counsel of the Most High;" each despising his reproof, setting at naught all his admonitions, saying, in obstinacy and obduracy, "I will not hear thee."

"I will not hear thee." My friend, a life not devoted to God can never be happy. Believe it, O believe it, your blessedness can never be found where you are seeking it, in objects beneath you. The soul is greater than all earthly things; greater than wealth, greater than sensual pleasure, greater than honor, greater than the earth, the sea, the moon, the stars, the sun—the material universe; and it can know rest and felicity only in God. There you are, longing for happiness; why are you not happy? why, with all your heart can wish in this world, is everything so stale, flat and unprofitable? God comes to you in your prosperity to tell you why it must be so, and to open to you the true source of happiness which can be found only in his service. But you spurn him away.

"I will not hear thee." No language can describe the dangers of the society by which you will find yourself surrounded in the day of prosperity. God speaks to you that he may put you upon your guard before it is too late. He whispers, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." But you prefer this fatal company to his presence, these flatteries to his faithfulness, and you cast in your lot among them.

"I will not hear thee." The Gospel unfolds to you the noblest objects of true ambition;" it calls you to "glory, honor, immortality;" it proposes to you a crown of glory that will never fade away; it offers you "a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory." God seeks to fire your soul with these sublime aspirations. But prosperity debases every heavenly faculty within you, and "the earth swallows you up."

"I will not hear thee." In compassion the Lord wishes to find access to your mind, that he may warn you of the true character of those gratifications which usually captivate the heart in the day of prosperity.

But the prodigal is impatient of his father's advice, and goes into a far country where no unwelcome entreaties and admonitions can intrude upon his festivities.

In, short, there is no argument which God does not ply in your prosperity,—calling upon you by your relations to him as the Father of mercies; addressing you by everything generous, tender, alarming, affecting. And this not once or twice, but constantly. Again and again, in the morning, the afternoon, at night, Jesus comes and knocks at your heart, and waits and listens if, in some propitious moment, his goodness may prevail on you to remove the bars and let him in, that he may sup with you, may bless you with spiritual blessings. But it is all in vain. Plead, supplicate, weep, implore, it does not signify; the heart is only locked and bolted more resolutely. "And this has been thy manner from thy youth." The weeds and vines which choke up the portal, shew that for many years it has been fast, and no visitant admitted from that quarter.

II. "I spake unto thee in thy prosperity, but thou saidst I will not hear thee," and if God's ways were as our ways, here of course would be an end of the matter. Love, mercy, bounty, thus crowning a man's days with blessings, and all despised; all serving only to foster worldliness, selfishness, pride, contempt for the benefactor; what remains but that justice shall say, "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone," or rather, "Cut him down, why cumbereth he the ground?" Very different, however, is God's conduct to our guilty race. The day is indeed coming when those who scorn must alone bear it; when, abandoned forever, the rejectors of Christ must, in solitary wretchedness, endure the contempt of the universe and the tortures of their own self-reproaches. But until then, Patience bears our insults, and Love still tries new methods to save us. His beneficence spurned, God has another resource, it is adversity. "In their affliction they will seek me early." Let us now glance at this part of our subject.

The scene is changed. For you a cloud muffles up the sun and hangs the heavens in sackcloth. You find

trouble and anguish; and it is in the thickest gloom that the Saviour now stands knocking at your gate, beseeching you to open and let him in that his comforts may delight your souls.

"When he slew them;" nor let any one impeach the goodness of God when he thus deals with us. Stubborn, rebellious as we are, it is love which blights our earthly hopes and joys, that our souls may be enriched by joys and hopes which are eternal. "When he slew them." Health had only fed your sensual passions; well, he sends sickness into your frames, stretches you on a bed of languishing, and you draw nigh to death. The success of your plans had only increased pride, worldliness, covetousness; well, all your schemes are shivered at a blow; some failure, some sudden catastrophe lays your fortune in the dust. Home and its joys, wedded love, parental happiness had converted your bosom into a temple for idols and their worship; well, a cold bleak shadow falls upon these joys, a coffin crosses your threshold, a funeral train darkens your door, and your heart bows down heavily under blows which have left it a lone mourner in its desolation.

"When he slew them;" this expression is not too strong, for there are things which are worse than death, which cause us to cry out for death when it will not come.—And as the language implies, it is fearful to think how, in an hour, by a single stroke, all this wretchedness may fall witheringly upon the heart. As Ferdinand, king of Spain, looked in admiration upon the portrait of a child who was laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks, the painter said, 'Would your majesty wish to see him weep?' And with a single touch of his brush upon the eyebrows and the corners of the mouth, the child seemed to be breaking its little heart in an agony of grief. Alas, my hearers, it was a counterfeit presentment of human life. A single touch can blast all; can turn our smiles into channels for tears; can cause the brightest and happiest to exclaim, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye, my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me." "Call me not Naomi, call me Marah, for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me."

"When he slew them, then they sought him." Affliction will not be without some influence for evil or for good. Under chastisement Pharaoh hardened his heart but the more. And hear how the prophet reproves the obduracy of the Jews, when the Lord sought to correct them. "In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth; but behold joy and gladness, slaying of oxen and killing of sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine, let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die." "O Lord, thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved, thou hast consumed them, but they have refused instruction, they have made their faces harder than a rock." The case before us seems more hopeful. When in our prosperity God had said, "Seek ye my face," he had been spurned away. Now, however, the language of the mourning soul is, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." "Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the Most High, therefore he brought down their heart with labor, they fell down and there was none to help; then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble."

This is not all. "They returned and inquired early after God." Jeremiah complained of Israel, that though sorely punished, "they refused to return." The genuineness of the prodigal's repentance is seen in his return to his father; and there is the same evidence of true repentance here. "They returned." Affliction recalled them from the sinful ways in which they had long wandered. They come, too, earnestly seeking to know what they must do. In the closet, in the sanctuary, from the lips of the preacher, from the pages of the once neglected Bible, they "enquire early after God."

"And they remembered that God was their rock, the high God their Redeemer." They confess that the rock of this world—its supports and confidences—is not as the Christian's Rock. "From the end of the earth," from the "far country" into which their passions had hurried them—they cry unto the Lord, when their hearts are overwhelmed within them, and implore him to lead them "to the Rock which is higher than they." They acknowledge the hand which has dashed their earthly

joys, and feel that it was only thus they could have been brought to lift their eyes to heaven. They adore the Redeemer who hath sent from on high and taken them and snatched them out of the vortex which was about to swallow them up forever.

"When he slew them, then they sought him, and they returned and enquired early after God; and they remembered that God was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer." And in all this they were perfectly sincere. It would, indeed, be a shocking libel to say that the tender emotions, the confessions, the tears which we witness in the house of mourning are hypocritical; the deepest piety is not more unquestionably the authentic sentiment of the heart. What God complains of is, that all proves abortive; that prayers, confessions, tears, vows all soon evaporate.

It is with this God upbraids us in the text, and I could easily shew that the indignant language he employs is only too justly merited, whether we consider the inconsistency, or the weakness, or the mockery of these fruitless professions.

But as our present subject is the danger of unsanctified adversity, I confine my remarks to this point. A relapse is more apt to be fatal than the original disease, and if, after we have escaped the corruptions of the world through the power of chastisement, we are again entangled therein, our last state is worse than the first. It is, therefore, of everlasting importance that we be upon our guard against the insidious processes by which the influences of affliction are gradually impaired, and the passions re-usurp a dominion which it was hoped they had lost forever.

In afflicting us, God designs to wean us from the world. He says, "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." He loves us too much not to seek to break off an attachment which will be fatal to the soul. We cannot be even superficially acquainted with the life required by the Gospel without at once feeling that either Jesus must reverse his laws to allow us to enjoy uninterrupted prosperity, or he must establish these laws in our hearts by disappointment and discipline. Our bereavements are intended to act as antidotes to the bane which

abundant success brings with it; and, to judge by appearances, they at first seem to accomplish this purpose; but by little and little their efficacy is weakend, and former associations and habits begin to re-assert their supremacy over the heart. "Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me?" said the Lord to Elijah; "because he humbleth himself before me I will not bring the evil in his days." Yet Ahab's heart was not changed; he returned to his sins; until, being often reproved and hardening his neck, he was suddenly cut down. Never was there repentance which seemed to be more profound and genuine than that of Israel when they exclaimed, "Come, let us return unto the Lord; for he hath torn and he will heal us; he hath smitten and he will bind us up; after two days he will revive us, the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." But what follows? It is directly after these professions that we hear Jehovah uttering the complaint of one at a loss what course to take with a people whose piety was so transient and deceitful, saying, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away."

God's motive in afflicting us is love. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,"—designing thus to correct them for their sins, to keep them back from greater sin, to draw them nearer to himself, to fit them for higher usefulness. Even with the severest discipline of sorrow, how difficult it is to keep the heart detached from sinful desires and glowing with love to Jesus and his service; what then would become of us if we were spared these salutary chastisements? And then when the heart is thus melted, we behold the love of the Father who has mercifully corrected us for our profit; we cannot forgive ourselves for the past; and for the future we say, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." But, alas, we soon begin to murmur; our hearts begin to question the love of God, to complain of his dealings, to rise up in mutiny against him.

This restless, rebellious spirit prepares a third temptation which finds in our afflictions an excuse for our per-

fidiousness. What ought to be our temper when we are under chastisements, you all know. We should imitate the example of those "who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Remembering that God is a Father correcting us in love, we ought to cast all our care upon him, assured that he will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax; we ought to cherish the filial submission and confidence of him who, in his bitterest agony, still exclaimed, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done."

Instead of this, we make our very afflictions a pretext for returning to the world. We plead our weakness and the need of some recreation to sustain us; forgetting that our weakness is the very reason why we must be detached from these follies. We say that our afflictions are peculiar; as if it were not indispensable that the remedy for such hearts should be a specific. Nay we even complain that our distress renders it impossible for us to devote ourselves to Jesus; when our own experience ought to teach us that it was only by this discipline that we could be aroused to a sense of our danger and duty. Ah, if in anguish of soul, we were deploring our depravity, God would hear and console us; but we love the world, we long to return to Egypt, and we murmur against God as a hard master, because he deals with us in the only method by which we can be saved.

In fine, unless the Lord mercifully interpose to arrest us, the last step is as inevitable as it is fatal. A heart thus seeking pretexts for faithlessness, will not be long faithful. A yoke so wearisome will soon be cast off. The world which had been renounced for a while, but whose charms have borrowed attractions from the distance, will resume its sovereignty. Some terms, some appearances will still be observed, but the heart is gone. In assuming an exterior of respect, the soul is only imitating Judas in his devotions, that it may imitate him in its treachery. With whetted appetites we surrender ourselves to pleasures for which we have long burned, and plunge again into the whirlpool from which we had blessed God for having mercifully drawn us.

And now what are we to say to such a life? Great as was the obduracy of Moab, God bore with him because he had been "at ease from his youth, and had not yet been emptied from vessel to vessel:" but you, my dear hearers, to whom this part of my subject applies, what must be your doom, if you defeat all the appliances of mercy and judgment. In returning to your former courses, you make a final and deliberate choice; you say, "There is no hope, no, for I have loved strangers, and after them I will go." If, after having made such solemn resolutions, you violate them, what infatuation is yours; for do the truths which so deeply affected you in affliction become less true because you cease to think of them?

This conduct betrays a fund of depravity which is most appalling. God's complaint against Israel was that, while all other nations had been left in darkness, they had been the objects of his peculiar attention, they had been instructed; yet they mingled in the idolatries of the surrounding people. And so with you. Others are abandoned to their blindness; but God has enlightened you. In the bottom of your heart you despise the things which others worship. Over and over you confess the vanity of the very objects which you still allow to seduce your heart. Is not this the summit of ingratitude and wickedness? And reflect how all this will appear to you in a dying hour. Then, at least, God will be heard; and what reply will you then make, when he reminds you how you frustrated the ministers of his word and providence, when Jesus shall recall all his patience and all your obstinacy? What answer will you give when he says—I spake to thee in thy prosperity, but thou didst spurn me; I came in the darkness of adversity, but thou didst mock me; I entreated, I addressed thy reason, I pleaded with thy conscience, I appealed to thy heart, and though thou didst bar me out and admit my enemies, still I did not forsake thee. I stood year after year, knocking, pleading, entreating, beseeching; I counted nothing too costly.—I laid down my life for you, and stood at the door, knocking with the cross wet with my own blood, when I might have broken in with a sword to be bathed in yours. Yet all this has been in vain. How will you

meet these reproofs? What will you reply to such a charge? Nothing, you will have nothing to say. You will be speechless, for you will be self-condemned. You will feel, as a dying man once said to me, that for you there remains only one doom; that the voice which once warned and entreated is now uttering those terrible words of despair, "Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand and ye did not regard it, but have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh, when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you; then shall ye call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."

The lessons to be derived from our whole subject are so plain that I might safely leave them to your own reflections.

One truth, and one which ought to affect our hearts, is, "the riches of the goodness and forbearance and long suffering of God." Blessings multiplied only to be despised, only to nourish worldliness, pride, selfishness, contempt; afflictions only mocking God with tears, confessions, promises to be perfidiously forgotten as soon as the heart is consoled;—after such obduracy and obstinacy what can we expect but that justice shall take its course, and those who are thus incorrigible be suddenly destroyed? Instead of this, hear how God treats these miserable sinners who have again and again wearied his patience and despised his entreaties: "But he being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity and destroyed them not; yea, many a time turned he away his anger, and did not stir up all his wrath, for he remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passeth away and cometh not again." What pity, what compassion. Tell me what sort of heart is that which can rebel against such a Being? which can call him a hard master, and turn such mercy into a motive for persevering in sin?

My beloved hearers, what sentiments are in your bosoms in view of such condescension and love? Can you abuse this long suffering and goodness? God forbid.—

No, when God speaks, let us hear his voice, let us, like Abraham, say, "Here am I," and whatever be his dealings, let us at once correspond with his designs.

If he blesses us with prosperity, let us enter into his gracious purposes. These mercies are intended to inspire gratitude, to bind us to him in filial obedience. We are enriched by his bounty that we may be almoners to the poor and suffering; that we may contribute to his cause upon earth; that we may do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. It behooves us, too, in such a state, to be watchful and prayerful; for it is when riches increase, that we are tempted to set our heart upon them, and the dangers of temporal prosperity are the most insidious which can assail the soul.

And in the day of adversity let us "consider;" consider the cause and designs of our afflictions. Let us say unto God, "Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me." "Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee; yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments." The voice of the rod may seem stern, but let us never forget that the rod is in the hands of a tender Father who speaketh unto us as unto children,—"My son, despise thou not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." The pillar which led Israel through the wilderness was dark by day, and luminous only at night; so God's dealings are during life wrapped in obscurity; but death will interpret all. Let us give our unlimited confidence to him who says, "What I do you know not now, but you shall know hereafter." However precious a diamond, it is only when cut with many facets that it shines in all its brilliancy; and the soul will reflect the radiance of the Sun of righteousness just as it is made perfect through suffering. Let us remember that every sorrow is sent to wean us from objects fatal to our spiritual prosperity, and to cause us to lift our eyes and stretch out our hands to that heaven in which alone we can be satisfied. Whatever our losses, let us not lose our afflictions. However grievous they may be at present, let us humble ourselves and bow meekly be-

fore the Chastener, knowing that "afterwards they yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them who are exercised thereby."

Thus living, we shall be safe and peaceful in whatever situation the providence of God may place us. Affliction will have no sting, prosperity no perils. Heavenly consolations will assuage all our griefs; heavenly benedictions will multiply all our joys. Adversity will prove to be the highest prosperity; for it will build up in us a faith, patience, courage, assurance, of which we had not known that we were capable. And earthly prosperity will elevate our hearts, fill them with celestial blessedness, cause them, even in such a world, to anticipate the calm, holy ecstasy of the glorified, into whose souls the Spirit of love forever pours a full tide of love, and whose zeal will be fired with new ardors, whose adoring gratitude shall swell with fresh raptures, as the ages of eternity roll on.

Now the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion, forever and ever. AMEN.

Sermon Fifteenth.

CHRISTIANS TO BE LIGHTS AND EXAMPLES.

"THAT ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."—PHILIPPIANS ii: 15,16.

THE regeneration of a ruined world is the very mission of the Gospel of Christ. The church and the world are, therefore, antagonistical societies. They are under such opposing influences, that there ever has been and ever must be, a settled, uncompromising conflict between them. Nor, in this controversy is there any argument so conclusive as that which is furnished in the lives of true, devoted Christians.

We find the first champions of the cross constantly glorifying God for the grace which commenced and nourished in their converts a principle of self-renouncing holiness; appealing triumphantly to these seals of their ministry; and in comparison with such vouchers, regarding gifts of eloquence, their apostolic office, their supernatural powers, as of little worth. And, on the other hand, the text, with many similar passages, declares, not only that the name of God might be blasphemed among the wicked by reason of the misconduct of professed Christians, but that such inconsistencies would defeat the Gospel, though Paul himself were the preacher.

I. In discoursing upon this subject, I begin by inquiring, whether the religion of Jesus ought to be held

responsible for the evil behavior of those who profess it? And I submit to you that there can be but one answer to this question. Indeed the people who are forever croaking and clamoring about the inconsistencies of professed Christians settle this matter by their very invectives; since they thus unconsciously confess that the standard of morality required by the Gospel is most exalted. No matter how wicked an infidel may be, nobody accuses him of not acting in accordance with his principles; it is felt by society that he is quite consistent when he openly lives in every sensual indulgence. But let a member of the church be only suspected of such things, and the world at once exclaims—He has fallen! How dishonorable! What a scandal to religion! The enemies of Christ themselves being judges, the doctrines of the Gospel are thus admitted to be most holy. A decisive tribute is rendered to these doctrines by the very sneers so liberally shed upon the personal deficiencies of professed converts.

The purest and most heavenly truths are, however, only truths. They can enlighten, admonish, exhort; they cannot compel. If a man supposed to be sane violate the dictates of reason and ruins himself, we say, he has acted irrationally; we do not impeach the dignity of the human intellect. A physician prescribes medicine, regimen, diet which would cure a disease. His patient promises to comply, but disobeys these counsels and dies. We condemn his folly; we do not blame his medical adviser. And just so with the Gospel. It dispenses doctrines which are pure, the reception of which must produce sanctity in the heart and life; but it cannot be held accountable for the delinquencies of those who assume a form of godliness, while rejecting its power.

"Well, well, all this is incontestable; but the Gospel asserts its potency to change the character." Assuredly; and the physician affirms that his medicines will correct the disorders of the system and cure the malady. Now, do you decide as to the virtue of his prescriptions, by examining the sick people who pretend to value and to take—but who in fact reject them? Judge righteous judgment as to the influence of the faith we preach.

Look not at those who have never opened their hearts to its transforming power; but look at the examples of those who attest its celestial efficacy;—the noble army of martyrs, the innumerable company of saints, the cloud of witnesses whose characters illustrate the sacred records, whose lives and deaths you so ardently admire. Nor only these ancient worthies. I appeal to living testimony—to the pious around you, within the circle of your own acquaintance, perhaps under your own roof—whose purity, zeal, self-sacrificing devotion at once receive your willing, or extort your reluctant esteem and homage.

I know, with shame I confess, that there have been, and still are most unworthy members in the communion of all the churches; but this is not the fault of the Gospel. Bad as these men may be, rest assured they would have been much worse without the restraints of religion. And if in the eyes of the world their profession seems a foil to their defects, setting them off in strong exaggerated colors, this fact is itself a concession of the glory of the Gospel. "What do ye more than others." Men expect more—they are justified in demanding more of a Christian than of others. In him, therefore, blemishes will be observed and condemned which would not be noticed in other men. All this is so, however, simply because the Christian's faith is so holy. A spot on the sun's disc attracts our attention because there is darkness where we had a right to expect that all would be bright.

II. Here I think I may rest as to our first topic. I suppose you will all admit the injustice of making the religion of Jesus responsible for the misconduct of those who profess it. I now advance another assertion. I affirm that men of the world are not only unfair to the Gospel, when they seek to load it with the sins of its nominal professors, but they are wholly unjustifiable in most of the censures which they love to lavish upon the members of Christ's church.

I at once acknowledge that there is a defectiveness in the sincerest Christians. This attests the perfection of the Gospel standard, that the purest saint will come

short of it. I know, too, as I have just said, that the faults of professed Christians stand out in bold relief, while their self denials and graces, shrinking from ostentation, do not appear unto men. And it is not to be questioned that there is, at this day, a great deal of spurious religion. In the age of the apostles *cross-bearing* was a word of the most stern significance; for the cross was an emblem of suffering, shame, and death. Those who then named the name of Jesus had to come out from the world, to fight the good fight of faith, to immolate ease, honor, fortune, family, often life. It cost something to be a Christian then. Now, Christianity has become a most accommodating, comfortable system. At present one may be an orthodox Christian, may even be esteemed an eminent Christian, not only without making sacrifices, but without having really chosen Christ and his truth. Multitudes are Christians by birth, through custom, or fashion. And in a period of such degeneracy there will, of course, be too much cause for invidious comparisons between the maxims, principles, spirit of the New Testament, and the sad discrepancies in the conduct of those who pretend to adopt that volume as their rule of faith and practice.

But still, for all that, I pronounce this everlasting carping and canting about hypocrisy in Christians to be nothing but hypocrisy in men of the world. The more you examine it, the more will you detect a want of all common equity, the utter absence of everything like the impartiality and honesty which characterize the dealings of honorable men in other matters. In their sneers and scoffs we have, in fact, the fulfillment of the Saviour's prediction. In his farewell address he prepares his disciples for the treatment they must expect; he warns us that a world which hated him, will not caress his followers; that if men call the Master Beelzebub, the servants will hardly be called angels—they must not hope to escape suspicions and accusations.

That these tirades are only so much ribald invective, is a matter of common observation among all candid people. But if any here present are disposed to question what I assert so confidently, I ask them to make two re-

flections; one on the character of these censors; the other on the censures they are constantly heaping upon the disciples of Jesus. Follow me in these thoughts.

First, the censors,—these purists thus eternally croaking about professors of religion—who are they?

Those who love Christ, alas, too often, feel their hearts bleed for the dishonor which treachery brings upon his cause. It is impossible to read without deep emotion the language of the apostle, in which he speaks of the frequent declensions around him, and of his anxieties, his sorrows, his expostulations, the bitter tears wrung from his soul, in view of such perfidiuosness. "Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ."

He felt that the worldliness, avarice, sensuality of professed Christians were far more disastrous to the truth, than all the attacks of open hostility. And he could not without shedding tears, see the sins of professed converts frustrating all his labors, and causing the Gospel to be despised. Nor was this love, this zeal, this solicitude peculiar to Paul; it is shared by every real pastor, by every real Christian. These will "cry and sigh for all the abominations" that are done in the land. They will glow with some of Elijah's jealousy. They will rejoice in the prosperity of Zion, and weep over her desolations. They will sympathize with the Hebrews who, though banished from their homes and bowed down under bondage, forgot their own miseries, thought only of Zion, as they poured out that plaintive wail of grief and love—"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." This language is the instinctive utterance of that deep concern which every faithful disciple feels for the honor of the church. In all her afflictions he will be afflicted; and rivers of water will run down his eyes, as he sees Christ's truth betrayed by those to whom it has been confided.

Yes, the wounds of Zion are felt as personal griefs by those who love Jesus. But is it from them we hear these

clamors about the inconsistencies of Christians? No; they mourn over them. They seek to heal these wounds. To them, dishonor brought upon the church is like disgrace staining their own families. Their souls are bowed down in silent mortification; or, if they speak, it is to God, pouring out their sorrows at his feet. It is from those who in their conduct contemn the authority of God, who violate the precepts of the Saviour, and who are ranged among his open enemies,—it is from these we hear all this outcry. These are our censors of Christian morals. these are the men who are so fastidious as to the duty, so over sensitive as to the reputation of the people of God; and who keep up such lamentations about the scandal brought upon religion. Now, does anybody believe that these cavillers are sincere? that they are truly jealous for the interests of the Gospel? that they really take to heart the injured glory of God? If so, they would wish to conceal these defects; nay, the wrong done to the Redeemer would kindle in their bosoms holy indignation, a noble zeal to defend his suffering cause; a generous impulse would hurry them to the rescue of one so dear to their hearts.

Instead of this, it is notorious that these men feel a secret pleasure in the imperfections of Christians. They delight to publish and exaggerate them. They belong invariably to one of two classes. They are either the secret haters of God, who are gratified when his cause suffers, who wish to tarnish his character by exposing the errors of his children, or they are men whose consciences trouble them with accusations of guilt; and who, enlightened, but unwilling to forsake their evil ways, find an opiate for their convictions in the irregularities of Christians. These are our censors. These are the puritans whose consciences are so tender, that they are incessantly deploring the deficiencies of the professors of religion; ever proclaiming what Christians ought to be, but are not; everlastingly pointing to every aberration, every indiscretion in church members; thanking God that they are not hypocrites as other men are, and thus quieting themselves in impenitence, worldliness and sin.

Having seen what is the character of those who are every day heard commenting on the conduct of Christians,

let us now pass to our second reflection, let us examine the charges constantly found in their mouths. A glance will expose the odiousness and wickedness of these old, stale insinuations and detractions.

Their *cruelty;* for it may be truly said, that the world is more severe in marking the offences of the righteous than the Bible itself. John and Jesus are the representatives of two contrasted types of piety. The former was austere, ascetical, sequestered from society; and he had this testimony that he pleased God. He was "a burning and a shining light." "Of all born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist." Jesus was the incarnation of divine love, purity, tenderness.—Twice, as if the Father's delight in him could not be repressed, a voice from heaven declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." But neither John nor Jesus could please the world. Its gossips were busy with the character of each. John "had a devil." Jesus was "a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber.

Their *depravity;* for uncharitable judging really proceeds from a corrupt heart. When free from the defilements of sin, David finds "rivers of waters" running down his eyes as he saw the real wickedness around him. It was when he had yielded to a guilty passion, that his indignation against an imaginary criminal would know no bounds, and he said, "The man that hath done this thing shall surely die." A Christian truly loving holiness and striving after it finds so much evil in himself, that he lies low before God in deep self-abhorrence. He cannot, with the pharisee point to others in self-complacency and arrogance. His are the attitude and the humble cry of the publican, who "would not so much as lift his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." A man who is thoroughly sincere and guileless himself, can scarcely believe that there are impostors and hypocrites in the world.—He possesses that charity, "which thinketh no evil," which believeth all things, hopeth all things." Those who are forever suspecting others, doubting their piety for the least irregularity, really judge others by themselves. They pique themselves on what they call their

knowledge of human nature, which is simply a consciousness of their own duplicity and selfishness. They exercise no charity, make no allowances, because they think that others must carry concealed in their bosoms the same passions which they nourish, and that in whatever seems virtuous all men are, like themselves, acting a part in which deception is necessary.

The *ungenerousness* of these taunts and invectives; since it is almost always through the influence of these very persons who are most satirical and unsparing that the converts to the Gospel are seduced into inconsistencies. So many attentions, so many snares spread before them, such examples, maxims, fashions, flatteries,—it is not surprising if the young and unsuspecting are decoyed, —nay, if some who imprudently comply in the hope of doing good are surprised into improper conformity to the world. But with what decency can the tempters point to the mischief which they themselves have done, and reproach the victims of their own pernicious solicitations? Lineal descendants are they of their father the Devil, who is styled "the accuser of the brethren," because he reviles them, after they have been betrayed by his own artifices.

The palpable *self-contradiction* of these cynics who thus sport themselves with the misbehavior of professed Christians, and its baneful consequences. For, no matter how vicious their own conduct may be, they expect us to believe that their hearts are better than their lives; but they cannot believe that the heart of the most upright is sincere, if he be overtaken by a single fault. Press upon them the duties of religion—which, of course, are as binding upon them as upon the Christian—and what is their excuse? They cannot perform a task so arduous. To be a real Christian is an achievement impossible to such a being as man is. Yet they grant no indulgence to beings subject to like passions with themselves, who are engaged in this unequal conflict. Let the guiltiest reprobate, after a life spent in open contempt of God, only confess his crimes on his death-bed, let him implore our prayers, let him shed a few tears extorted by terror, —and these people are shocked at our want of charity,

if we do not at once open wide the doors of paradise and assure him of heaven. But the salvation of the most devoted saint is more than doubtful, if, after twenty, thirty, fifty years of exemplary piety, the lustre of his character be dimmed by a frailty, by an indiscretion which has caused him to weep bitterly, day and night, before God.

Our last remark as to these opprobriums and depreciations has reference to their *impiety* and *barbarity*.

Impiety; for the Gospel is the only hope of the world, it is "the wisdom and power of God unto salvation." Take away this heavenly resource, and the whole human family sinks into irretrievable perdition. Now these incessant diatribes against the righteous are, in fact, attacks upon the Gospel; and, like all calumny, they are a fire which tarnishes and blackens what it cannot destroy. It is not hypocrisy which is assailed, it is religion itself. These detractors pretend, indeed, that their remarks are levelled only against dissimulation and falsehood; but the effect of their sarcasms is to impair all confidence in the Bible; it is to bring religion itself into contempt.

And *barbarity;* for what do these cavillers really mean by the repetition of their cold sneers and flippancies? They mean that there are no true Christians. Disguise it as they may, this is the inference they wish people to draw. But what an inference! Because Judas and Simon Magus were false-hearted, therefore the apostles were deceivers. Because some merchants are dishonorable, some pastors unprincipled, therefore all merchants are rogues, all ministers of the Gospel are profligates. I apply to this insinuation the epithet *barbarous*, because it outrages all decency. It is a sort of reasoning which is revolting and horrible, since it would throw poison into every source of human confidence. How many friends have proved unfaithful; is there, therefore, no such thing as sincere friendship upon earth? How many wives have been perfidious; is there, therefore, no chastity in woman? The world has sometimes known such a monster as an unnatural mother; but who, from such a hideous phenomenon, would wish to draw the conclusion that all mothers are unnatural—that this

purest, dearest, sweetest, tenderest love is all a counterfeit and a falsehood?

III. If you have followed me in the preceding articles, you will I hope, concede two truths. You will admit that the Gospel is not responsible for the misconduct of those who dishonor it; and that this universal fault-finding with the professors of religion is nothing but so much ribaldry and profanity. But, while all this is so, what then? What argument are we to deduce from these concessions? Are we at liberty to disregard the opinion of the world? Far from it. The word of God and our own good sense ought to carry us to the very opposite decision. They admonish us that the scrutiny and censoriousness of the world are the very reasons why we should be more circumspect, more scrupulously holy in all our life and conversation.

Our text recognizes the injustice of which I have been speaking. It declares that the children of this world among whom we have our conversation, are "a crooked and perverse generation." And prophets, apostles, the Saviour, the entire Scriptures warn us to expect obloquy and enmity. But, after all, we are sent to save these crooked and perverse people; and, if our mission is to be successful, we must deal with them as they are; we must consider their prejudices, their captiousness, their sins.

True the Gospel cannot justly be held accountable for the inconsistencies of those who profess it; but it is held accountable for them. True, the charges against Christians are most unfair; but they are repeated every day and hour. What follows? This, plainly this: We must "with well-doing put to silence the ignorance of foolish men," "that whereas they speak evil of you as of evil doers, they may be ashamed who falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." Nor must we only maintain a character of unblemished integrity; this the men of the world may do. A Christian must go farther; he must exemplify in his conduct the tempers and graces which become his heavenly calling, and which form a style of excellence high above the ethics of this world.—We are to be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God

without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." As the eternal Word became incarnate in the man Christ Jesus, so the written word of life must find its incarnation in our lives and characters. Thus must we vindicate the Gospel from the aspersions of those who seek false witnesses against it, as they did against its Author. Thus will we compel an unjust world, "seeing our good works, to glorify our Father who is in heaven."

We cannot open the sacred volume without at once perceiving several striking facts. We find the first preachers always appealing confidently to their converts as to witnesses whose conduct attested the efficacy of the Gospel. And we find the first Christians appealing as confidently to their lives as proofs of their faith. The apostle declares that those brought to Jesus by his ministry were letters written by the Holy Spirit, recommending not only him but the Gospel which he preached. They were "epistles known and read of all men;" those who could not spell out a letter made with ink, easily comprehending the truth transcribed in a holy life; those who despised the revelations in the Bible, reading every day in living examples a revelation which they could not despise, a revelation bearing God's plain signature,—a law silently but constantly convincing them of their guilt,—a Gospel silently but irresistibly winning them to the Redeemer.

Another most remarkable fact. Where there were churches, the apostles despaired of any great success in their preaching, unless the members of the churches exhibited practically the sanctifying power of the Gospel. Whatever different opinions may be entertained as to the declaration that Jesus "could not do many wonderful works" in a certain place "on account of the unbelief" of his hearers, there can be no dispute about the language of our text. It is here distinctly affirmed that apostolic zeal and eloquence might be foiled by the misconduct of professed believers. And if all the earnest, devoted piety —the miracles, the tears, the soul-stirring appeals of those heavenly messengers could be thus disarmed,—

what is to become of us, if our ministry be not seconded, if it be refuted by your lives.

We sometimes express surprise at the little success of the Gospel; that after eighteen hundred years, it has achieved no wider conquests, and has still daily to renew a conflict in which it seems often to be baffled. We are even tempted at times to doubt whether it can make good all which it promises. But when we look at the organizations called churches, and examine the conduct of most of the people called Christians, the real wonder is that the Gospel has done so much. Take the most evangelical of our churches; take this church. We make our boast of orthodoxy, and are confident that we are guides to the blind, the lights of those which dwell in dark places. But if Paul were here, would he not find too abundant cause to remonstrate with us—as he formerly did with the Jews—for resting in a knowledge of the truth which is miserably unproductive? On all sides he would see much skill in expounding evangelical doctrine, with but little practical conformity to it; he would hear us exposing human depravity by overwhelming demonstrations, while deplorably unconscious of the burden of our own ungodliness; he would behold too many expatiating on the atonement and righteousness of Christ, without having savingly embraced them; and loudly insisting on the necessity of holiness, while wretchedly delinquent in all those graces which are the fruits of the Spirit.

A great deal has been lately said and written about the mistranslation of one or two Greek words in our version of the Bible. But the most lamentable and pernicious misinterpretations of the Scriptures are those published everywhere in the conduct of multitudes who misrepresent its teachings and its power. The transcendent purity of heavenly truth renders it necessary that the children of the world should see it practised by men like themselves; and our pulpits will be comparatively impotent, until our churches shall furnish such examples, until they shall rescue the Gospel from the dishonor into which it has been sunk; until—illustrating the faith and grace of Jesus—walking in holiness and love—a

peculiar people shall come forth from the masses of baptized worldliness, covetousness, selfishness abounding in every place, and shall shew what the Gospel is, and what the Gospel can do in changing, regenerating, blessing this guilty earth.

To no archangel has Jesus committed interests so dear to his heart as those which he has confided to us; let us be faithful to the trust. I need not tell you that we live in a day, amidst events, portending disaster to the enterprises of the Gospel; and which are testing, in the severest crucible, the faith, patience, meekness, fidelity of every child of God. At all times every Christian has his mission. That he is a Christian makes him also an apostle. But it is especially at such a time as this, that every disciple of Jesus is called to shew the difference between his principles and those of the world around him. Civil war is a fire from hell which not only brings to the surface the scum and feculence of a nation, but stirs up all the most malignant passions of our depraved nature. Amidst abounding iniquity, let not our love wax cold. "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for the abominations that are done in the midst thereof." Let us bear this mark upon our foreheads now; and so bear it, that not only angels but men shall see and reverence its lustre. On every side we hear of loyalty and disloyalty, of oaths of allegiance to human governments. Recollect that the present is an hour which is putting to the proof our loyalty to Jesus, and when fidelity will clothe the Gospel with peculiar glory. Let us be faithful. Jesus has been wounded enough by wicked hands,—wounded for our sins. Let him not be wounded by our hands,—wounded by our sins. He has been wronged and insulted by his enemies. Let him not be wronged and insulted "in the house of his friends." For us he "endured the cross, despising the shame; can we bear the thought of crucifying him afresh, and putting him to an open shame by our perfidiousness?

For my own part, if I may express my personal feelings —while I see you true to Jesus and his cause, my soul

can stand erect and glorify God in any fires, in any calamity that may come. "What is my hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." You know the griefs which have lately swept over me in gust after gust; but I have been filled with unspeakable consolation, as I beheld your harmony, "your order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ." And if it should please heaven still to try me with affliction, to rain sorrow and pain upon my head, I think I could find in some part of my soul comfort and patience, while reflecting that it was "for your consolation and salvation" that I thus suffered.

"Yea," (to use the words immediately following the text) "and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." But if this peace should be disturbed, if the animosities which are everywhere convulsing society, embittering families and churches, should profane these altars, if your harmony, your steadfast devotion to Christ should give way—then, indeed, I could have no heart to bear up under such a calamity; I should feel that for me the happiness of life, the bitterness of death were past.

In finishing this address, let me first speak to those who openly or covertly quiet themselves by dwelling upon the inconsistencies of professed Christians. For you, my friends, the subject is full of solemn warning.

The text declares that these carpings are only the pretexts of a crooked and perverse spirit. They are not only no pleas, but they condemn you out of your own mouth. If you should see the pretended friends of your father or child dealing falsely with him, concealing a dagger to stab him—would you, for that reason, stand aloof and moralize upon the hollowness of human affections? No, your whole soul would be roused to protect him against these disguised enemies. And if you had a spark of love for Jesus, the treachery of his professed followers would instinctively draw you to him, and enlist your influence in behalf of his injured cause.

Suppose I admit all you allege against Christians, it could furnish no sort of apology for you; for it could have no sort of connection with your impenitence and disobedience. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth." Let me recommend to you a wiser course. Be a prophet in your own country. Rest assured that this eagerness to justify your own conduct by pointing to that of others is always a desire to find an excuse for something of which conscience condemns you. Instead, then, of criticizing the defects of Christ's servants, turn your eyes upon your own sins which have so long provoked the justice, and perhaps have almost exhausted the patience of God. It is true, (a reflection which causes us to tremble) that, if we are faithless, and you perish through our evil example, the Lord will require your blood at our hands; but as he has expressly declared, your destruction will not be less certain. You have the Bible; study the Gospel there, and not in its human and imperfect manifestations. You have the preaching of the word and your own conscience. From childhood the truth has had a lodgment in your bosom; the Holy Spirit has been pouring light into your mind; and before you have been the examples of those whose piety you cannot question. Go not, then, all the way to the bar of the Judge with a pretext which can avail you nothing; which will only prove the depravity of your own heart, and aggravate the sentence justly pronounced upon you.

If you are resolved not to identify yourself with the cause of Christ, nor to support his truth, at least do not join those who are ever seeking to injure that cause by exploring and publishing the frailties of its advocates. You do not intend, perhaps, to damage religion; but such is the inevitable effect of these "railing accusations" against those who name the name of Christ. Let me admonish you, too, that this spirit of ribaldry reacts most disastrously upon your own character, and must draw down the anger of God upon your head. When the wicked children of Bethlehem derided the baldness of Elisha, there came forth ravenous beasts which tore them in

pieces. And I now tell you, from God, that none are more certainly delivered over to the dominion of wild and fatal passions than those who delight to mock at the infirmities and deficiencies of his people.

Christians, my beloved brethren, let us lay this subject closely to heart. I ought to speak to you of your own salvation. The foolish virgins were condemned, not for the evil they had done, but because their lights did not shine. A religion which does not clearly separate you from a sinful world now, will not suffice to separate you from a lost world in eternity. I ought to remind you, also, of your holy lineage. The children of earthly princes are taught to regard as worse than death any stain upon their honor; shall the children of the Heavenly Majesty be less jealous of their reputation? The text appeals to you as "the sons of God;" and the Scriptures entreat you to "be followers of God as dear children." They seek to stir up our filial longings after the divine image, to awaken in us a consciousness of our divine affinities, and thus to raise our aspirations to that perfection of the soul which constitutes its likeness to the Deity. But to-day I would bring the matter to a single issue; I would reason and plead as to your influence upon those around you. It was with no self-complacent blindness, it was with a conscience which made him superior to the precautions of a false humility, that Paul said, "Be followers of me, and mark them who walk so as ye have us for an ensample." Which of us would venture to utter this invitation? Alas, the best of us cannot say *Come;* we can only say *Go.* And yet men are following us in one direction or the other. We cannot be hid. We cannot live without distributing some influences. Our conduct must advance or retard the cause for which Jesus died.

In the church we cannot be worldly, covetous, faithless to our vows; we cannot be indifferent to the success of the Gospel and the triumphs of its institutions; we cannot be lukewarm, contentious, selfish, given to "murmurings and disputings," without bringing scandal upon the name of Jesus. And in the world, if our temper and conduct resemble those of the unconverted about us; if we do not exemplify the meekness, sincerity,

truth, gentleness, humility, purity of the Redeemer, we dishonor the Gospel, our discrepancies become spots and stains upon religion itself.

We profess to be converted; but conversion—by the very force of the word—is the beginning of a new course in an opposite direction; it is the commencement of a life, not only new, but entirely different. We are Christians; but to be Christians is to be "separate from sinners; it is to be "a peculiar people zealous of good works;" it is to be "not conformed to this world;" it is to be "crucified to the world;" it is to "crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts;" it is (as the text declares) to "shine as lights in the world."

If in our conduct the world sees nothing of these tempers and graces of the Gospel, it will form a corresponding estimate of the Gospel itself, and the reproaches of those who reproach us will fall upon Jesus and his truth. Nor will the injury be diminished—it will be only augmented—by our apparent zeal and devotion in the services of the sanctuary, by an irreproachable profession, by an assumption of great orthodoxy and spirituality. We are to "shine as lights in the world;" we are to let our lights so shine, that "men seeing our good works, may glorify our Father in heaven." The world places little value upon exterior precision; it does not understand faith, orthodoxy, spirituality; but it does comprehend and reverence meekness, humility, honesty, purity; and if these be wanting, our sanctimoniousness will inspire only a deeper contempt for us, and religion will be involved with us in this contempt.

Beloved brethren, let these thoughts abide with us always. "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light; for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth; proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." I trust, I know there are some before me upon whom the truths this day uttered will not be lost; some who yearn after that life of faith and entire consecration which alone can raise the church from its present degeneracy. Let us at once obey

these heavenly aspirations. By our zeal, holiness, self-immolation, unwearied dedication, let us uphold the suffering interests of the Redeemer.

It is not open apostasy which, at this day, dims the splendor of the truth; it is that real Christians "mind earthly things," and are thus, as the apostle says, "the enemies of the cross of Christ;—its worst enemies—since their virtues invest their testimony with great weight, and they practically deny the potency of the cross to crucify their pride and attachment to the vanities of this life. See that you are not found among these enemies. Rest satisfied with nothing less than the consciousness of a piety which shall put to shame all the clamors of a censorious world. The persecutors of Daniel said, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." Let us so act that an uncompromising fidelity to Jesus shall be the only charge which malice can invent against us. If the wicked love not the Gospel, let us compel them, at least, to respect it. In the midst of a society where all are eagerly seeking to amass wealth, to secure worldly honor, or sensual gratification, let us show that our affections are set upon things above. In days like these, when the worst passions are abroad, alienating those once dear to each other, and inflaming wrath, malice, hatred, all uncharitableness—let us remember him "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered, threatened not," and who hath said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." Disinterestedness, gentleness, uprightness, a noble superiority to the world, peace, charity, love,—if these fruits of the Spirit are seen in our lives, they will not only silence the censures of "a crooked and perverse nation," but they will subdue their enmity, conquer their prejudices, and, with a still but resistless eloquence, draw them to honor the Redeemer now, that they may be honored by him hereafter.

"That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world,

holding forth the word of life." It is the duty, dignity. responsibility of the Christian that the apostle is enforcing in the words which I have thus sought to impress upon you. His allusion is to a light-house, and it recalls to my mind an incident related by a distinguished traveller, with which I finish this discourse.

"Being at Calais," remarks the writer, "I climbed up into the light-house and conversed with the keeper.—'Suppose,' said I, 'that one of these lights should go out.' 'Go out? impossible!' he exclaimed, with a sort of consternation at the bare hypothesis. 'Sir,' he added, pointing to the ocean, 'Yonder, where nothing can be seen, there are ships going by to every part of the world. If to-night one of my burners were to go out, within six months would come a letter, perhaps from India, perhaps from America, perhaps from some place I never heard of, saying, On such a night, at such an hour, the light at Calais burned dim, the watchman neglected his post, and vessels were in danger. Ah, sir, sometimes, in the dark nights, in stormy weather, I look out to sea, and feel as if the eye of the whole world were looking at my lights.—Let them go out? burn dim? O never, never, never!'"

May he who "walketh in the midst of the golden candlesticks" arm us all with a jealousy and anxiety wakeful as that of this guardian of the French beacon. May we ever feel that the eyes of God and of the whole world are upon us. And in eternity may we not only find that no souls have perished through our faithlessness, but may we be among those who—sustained and triumphing by almighty grace—having turned many to righteousness—shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and as the stars forever and ever. God grant us this unspeakable mercy, for Jesus' sake.

"Wherefore, also, we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power; that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you and ye in him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Sermon Sixteenth.

LOVE TO CHRISTIANS AN EVIDENCE OF CONVERSION.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."—I John iii : 14.

THERE is really no reason why the treatise from which I select this text should be termed, the "General Epistle of John." It has not a single one of the characteristics which mark that class of compositions. If you turn to the inspired epistles, you find them variously addressed; some to particular churches; some to the saints in a specified part of the world; some to the saints at large; some to a particular branch of the faithful; and some to individual christians. But this book has no address; nor has it any farewell or benediction. There is, to be sure, the easy, colloquial style of correspondence, but this idiom was very congenial to the tender, loving heart of our apostle, and we find it pervading the Gospel written by him. This work is really an inspired essay or dissertation; not an epistle. But whatever the title, it is a wonderful production, breathing throughout the sweetest, heavenliest strains of love, blended with the most glorious doctrines, the divinest precepts, the sublimest mysteries of the Gospel.

The passage which I have just read is familiar to you all; but on that very account it may not have received from you the attention it deserves. I am going to make it the subject of our meditations this morning.

I. And, first, observe, the text takes it for granted that assurance is attainable by every Christian. "We *know* that we have passed from death unto life." Nor is this an isolated passage; you can easily recall others equally emphatic upon this great truth. But, now, understand what I am affirming. Of course no unregenerate person can know that he is in a state of salvation; for he is not. He may flatter himself in his own eyes and cry "Peace, peace;" but it is because he is wilfully blind. And a truly converted man may be depressed by fears. Wo to us, if doubts as to our salvation could make that salvation doubtful. What I say is, that assurance is the privilege of every child of God. Indeed it would be most deplorable if he could not attain this certainty; if after his eyes have been opened to the infinite importance of eternal things, he must yet be left to live all his days in suspense and apprehension.

For, just consider what is the question at stake. It is, whether "we have passed from death unto life." You at once perceive that the text speaks of spiritual life and death; and the verb used—"have passed"—like all the Scriptures – assumes as a fact admitted, that spiritual death is our natural condition.

But, now, what a condition. Death is the privation of life; I say privation; for you cannot apply the word to anything which was never alive. Objects which were never endowed with the vital principle can, of course, never die. Death is the withdrawment, the extinction of life. Spiritual death is the loss of spiritual life with all its ineffable blessings. God is to the soul what the soul is to the body. As our material frame instantly dies, when the soul leaves it; so the soul is dead when its union with God ceases. Sin has severed that union. Cut off from God, from all spiritual affinity with "the Father of Spirits," the soul is dead, its divine existence and immortal beauty are gone, it is separated from the source of peace and love and life. What a condition this now! What a future, should we die in this condition. If we had any adequate conception of things, such a state as this—moral, spiritual death, and this death the harbinger of the second, eternal death—would

fill us with humiliation, concern, alarm; it would frighten and appal us.

I have come into this pulpit almost immediately from the chamber of death. A few days since, I was requested to visit a young man well known to many in this audience, nearly related to some of you. This morning, at an early hour, I called and found he had just breathed his last; and my heart was wrung, I could not repress a flood of tears, as I stood at the foot of his bed and gazed silently upon him. In those eyes what living lustre had burned; and now, all their fire quenched, how dull, vacant, fixed, and glazed those orbs. That face once gleamed with health, was radiant with light; and now see how yellow, wan, sunken, haggard. A day or two since that form, a model of manly vigor, moved in elastic beauty; and now there it lies, cold, frozen, stiffened. But what is this to the death of a soul? a soul once the abode of God, instinct with celestial vitality, animated by spiritual joy and glory, and now deserted, dark, fallen, withered, dead.

Nor is death a condition only of privation; it is a state of total and swiftly progressive corruption. There are degrees in life, but there are none in death; that which dies is entirely dead. And no sooner has life been withdrawn from the body, than the principle of destruction, with a rapidity truly fearful, reduces to putrefaction all the strength and vigor which the more sluggish principle of growth had required years to construct. Hence, alienated from all vital contact with God, the soul is not only dead, but "dead in trespasses and sins."

From this mournful condition we pass when we are converted to God. We are then delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." And now can any enquiry be half so important to us as that which concerns this subject? Have I known this transformation? Have I passed from death unto life? Have I experienced the only change which attracts any notice in heaven, and compared with which all earthly transitions from poverty

to wealth, from sickness to health, from a dunghill to a throne are really no sort of alterations in a man's condition at all.

Take another thought as to the importance of certainty upon this unspeakably interesting topic. I refer to the blessings which spring from assurance as to our being in a state of acceptance with God.

There is not a mercy which does not become a thousand times sweeter, when I feel that it comes from my own Father. True, he loves me too well to give me my portion in such a world as this; but he sends me these favors as tokens of his affection. On the other hand, if we have no evidence of our adoption, prosperity ought to awaken apprehensions lest we should be receiving our good things in this life.

In trouble and adversity, assurance of faith is a blessing beyond all thought. My fortune, all my earthly possessions have departed; but I know that I have treasures in heaven. Sorrow and anguish have laid hold upon me, the sun has gone down on my hearth and my heart; and amidst shivered hopes and joys, I sit and mourn in bitterness of soul; but I know that these afflictions are the chastenings of love, that they are sent and regulated by One who watches over me with more than a mother's devotion, and whose sympathies never yearn over me with such tender solicitude as when he is purifying me by sharp yet necessary discipline. In pining sickness to know that we are Christ's is medicine, it is a cordial, it is health. And what shall I say of a dying hour? How melancholy a spectacle is a Christian oppressed with fears and doubts in those last eventful moments. What peace, joy, holy triumphing is his who can then exultingly exclaim. "*I know* that my Redeemer liveth." "*I know* whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." "Even so, come Lord Jesus, come quickly."

In all our approaches to God, the certainty of our having passed from condemnation to life will inspire the most delightful confidence. With this assurance, the child of God knows what it is to enter into his closet and shut the door behind him, and, falling on his knees, to

say "Abba Father." He looks at the promises of the Gospel, and feels that they are all yea and amen to him in Christ Jesus. He hears the awful threatenings of the law; but they have no terror for him. "Who shall lay anything," he exclaims, "to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that hath loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

It is unnecessary for me to multiply arguments to prove the benefits derived from assurance as to our being in a state of salvation. Nothing will excite such lively gratitude; for we cannot be thankful for mercies unless we are sure they are ours; we cannot rejoice that our names are written in heaven, if we do not know it. Nothing will so effectually arm us against the snares and seductions of sin. Nothing will enlist all our powers for God with such a cheerful consecration; for "the joy of the Lord is our strength;" and it is as faith rises to full assurance, that joy springs up in our souls, that we welcome duty, sacrifice, suffering for Jesus, that we exclaim, "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them and rose again."

II. You see now the great importance of ascertaining that we have passed from a state of nature to a state of grace and salvation. It is to be feared that in a matter of such surpassing moment, too many rest upon some vague ground of hope which would not satisfy them as to their title to any earthly possessions. And thus they live on, singing lullabies to their consciences, until eternity

shall open their eyes to the most fatal of delusions. Or, if their religion be genuine, they forfeit all its strengthening, sustaining, purifying consolations.

If, however, we are guilty of this deplorable folly, the Scriptures are not to blame. They not only admonish us to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith, to give all diligence to the full assurance of hope, but they furnish infallible tests by which we may determine what is our true condition before God. And it is to one of these criterions I ask you to give your attention in what remains of this discourse.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, *because we love the brethren.*" Affection for the children of God is then a certain evidence of our having passed from a state of spiritual death to a state of spiritual life; and I request you to examine this point with great care, because, while of all tests this seems the most direct and simple, it is really that upon which our deceitful hearts are most apt to mislead us.

It is self-evident, for instance, that we may cherish strong attachments to the children of God because they sustain certain natural relations to us. There may be social or domestic ties uniting us to them; and piety will not impair, it will often elevate and strengthen these affinities. The father or husband may have no love for Jesus, and yet the daughter or wife may become dearer to him as piety diffuses its graces over her life and character.

Or a Christian may be naturally endowed with virtues and excellences which must win the esteem and friendship of men of the world. The young man who came to Jesus was not only not converted, but he was unwilling to be converted. Every human being is just as holy as he really intends to be; and just as much converted as he is willing to be. This young man "went away sorrowful;" yet, such were his constitutional amiabilities that "Jesus beholding him, loved him." Now suppose one thus lovable to be regenerated and brought into the church; it is plain that he might attract admiration and attachment, not for his new, spiritual, gracious attributes, but for those which he possessed in his unconverted condition. And so of other elements of character. The dis-

ciples of Christ are to cultivate those traits which are "lovely and of good report." "Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth." There are virtues which the child of God possesses in common with the members of society around him. Stern integrity, stainless honor, benevolence, generosity, patriotism, disinterestedness, devotedness in love and friendship—it were a libel to deny that unregenerate men may be endowed with these qualities. If piety be sincere it will exalt these virtues, and throw a peculiar charm over them. And if we esteem them very highly in children of the world, they must draw us towards the children of God.

In these, and in similar cases, it is plain that our regard for the people of Christ is no sort of criterion as to our condition. The sentiment in our text is love for the children of God *as such, and because they are such.* It is a complacency, a delight in what is spiritual in their character; an affection called out by the graces of the Spirit seen in them, and terminating in these graces. And this attachment, let me say, must have all the marks of true, genuine love.

It must be cordial. "As I have loved you, that ye also love one another." "See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."

It must be sincere; it is called "the unfeigned love of the brethren." To love "in word and in tongue" proves nothing but our own hypocrisy; it must be "in deed and in truth."

The love indicated in the passage before us is an affection for all who are Christ's. It is impossible to look around us and not feel that a great deal which goes by the name of love for Jesus and his people is nothing but party spirit. John saw "no temple in heaven." But if there be no sectarian church there, what will become of the zeal and piety of multitudes?—Humbling as it is, the fact must be confessed, that when we examine the world called Christian, the most conspicuous feature in it is this wretched and deplorable party spirit; a temper which is a compound of ignorance, and superstition, and arrogance, and malice; which contracts and debases the mind; which empoisons and corrupts the heart, and

which yet affects peculiar sanctity and devotion. The sentiment which proves the soul to be regenerate rises above this selfish spirit. True, we cannot help cherishing the strongest attachment for those who most fully and nobly follow Jesus; but, however we lament their errors, our love will go out to all as far as we discover in them the lineaments of the Gospel.

I will only add, that this love must combine all the ingredients of a disinterested, ardent affection; esteem—they are God's children, and though the world knows them not, they are honorable in his sight, and in our judgment they will be the excellent of the earth; sincere desire for their welfare and happiness; pleasure in communion with them; sympathy in their sorrows and joys; forbearance toward their infirmities and errors. In short, like all true love, this friendship will assert its character by acts and offices of kindness, and by sacrifices when they are needed. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

III. If you have followed me, you perceive now what is the love of which the text speaks. I am mistaken if you have not begun, by this time, to feel another thing, to realize that this love is not quite so common as you had supposed it to be. When first proposed, this test of regeneration serves as an opiate; for we quiet ourselves with some vague, natural partiality for certain traits which we have esteemed in certain pious members of society. But when this criterion is analyzed, we find that it is exceedingly searching in its nature; and we see, too, why it is so decisive as to our spiritual condition.

For, taking only a general view of the matter, it is almost self-evident that this love, in its very principle and essence, is supernatural and divine. Observe the peculiar language of Peter. "Seeing that ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren." This love is, then, not natural; it is a fruit of the Spirit; one of the most blessed effects of his highest—his purifying influence in the obedient heart. Ponder, too, these words. "As

touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you, for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another;" and again, this remarkable passage—"Beloved let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God."

These and similar declarations affirm that this love is wrought in the soul by God's own immediate tuition, and that it is the infallible proof of regeneration. It is a new union, springing from sources entirely above those relations and motives which bind together the men of the world. It is a spiritual union, cemented by spiritual affinities. And it is a heavenly union; to be perfected and perpetuated when all earthly ties shall have been forever dissolved.

But let us look a little more closely and practically at the test proposed by the apostle, and we will see why it is so infallible as to our having passed from a state of condemnation to one of acceptance with God.

That you may at once feel this, let me ask, why is it, in fact, that our hearts go out to those who are Christ's? It is simply because we love Christ, because his truth, his church, his cause are dear to us. Whatever artificial, superficial distinctions human pride and vanity may seek to erect, there are only two parties which divide all the members of society; and if we are Christians we have chosen our party, we are ranged unequivocally "on the Lord's side," and we rejoice in every accession of strength to his cause. As to the mass of mankind, we know they are not for Jesus. Whatever may be their seeming respect for religion (and we thank them for this,) they do not even profess to be the followers of the Redeemer, they have no real sympathy with that kingdom which he has set up on the earth, all the maxims, principles, the entire spirit of which are irreconcilably opposed to the lodged, rooted desires and purposes of the carnal heart. I have already said that they may possess many traits which attract our respect and admiration; but love for Jesus is no more an element in their virtues, than it is in their vices.

When, then, any come out from the world and give their allegiance to the Saviour, we at once welcome them,

our hearts go out to embrace and encourage them. They now occupy a new relation to that Being who is dearest to our souls. They love him, they have enlisted in his service. And it is because they are Christ's and have thus engaged in behalf of his cause, that they find a place in our affections. In this aspect, our love for those who are Christ's proves that we have passed from death unto life, because it is really love for Christ and zeal for his cause.

Another view of this sentiment is, if possible, still more conclusive. I mean that in which we regard it as an attachment for the image of God which we discover in his children. It is true, that in the sincerest Christians there will still be defects, and we cannot love their imperfections and blemishes. But if they are born of God, they, of course, bear some resemblance to him; and, however dimmed or marred the lineaments, if we love God we will love his likeness. We are never to propose any human model as our example. We have only one pattern. In running the race set before us, it is a thought full of sublimity and inspiration, that "we are compassed about by a cloud of witnesses." But we are not to be looking at them. The cloud is dark in itself, and owes all its brightness to the sun. It is upon that sun our gaze is to be fixed. "Let us run with patience the race set before us *looking unto Jesus.*" Still, wherever we discern the features of God's character, our affections will be instinctively drawn to them. We will love the image of God; and this, let me say, upon whatever metal that image is engraved, whether precious or base, and whether it be cut in ivory or in ebony. Nothing can be more simple and decisive than this reasoning. It is that, if we love God, his moral likeness will be dear to us; and if his moral likeness seen in our brethren, be dear to us, it settles the point that we love God; and "every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."

One other demonstration from this affection is supplied from the words of the text. It is love for "*the brethren*" —an attachment for those who belong to the same spiritual household. If God were only our creator, we might admire those who nobly forsake the ranks of his

enemies and identify themselves with his truth and honor; we might esteem and love them, as we will love angels, for those attributes in which they resemble the Creator. But there would be no family attachment. God is more than our creator. All Christians sustain to him the dearest and tenderest filial relations. He is a paternal Deity. Of all the titles which he wears, the most endearing is that of Father. In teaching us how to pray, Jesus commences with this great, ennobling, purifying, rejoicing truth, that God is "our Father." He thus recognizes and reminds us of the heavenly ties which bind us together as members of God's family. But this union of hearts on account of our affinity to our common Father, proves, of course, that we are the children of God, and "have passed from death unto life."

The propositions thus indicated have been submitted, not to establish the affirmation in the text, which rests upon God's testimony, but simply to manifest the truth to your consciences. And there are several other passages in the sacred oracles which bear so closely upon the same point, that I wish I had time to dwell upon them.—"Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten." Here love for the children is inferred from love for the Father. And the converse is also implied. I mean that love to the Father may be inferred from love to the children. "But whoso hath this world's goods and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love" (it is not said, of his brother, but) "of God in him?" Here affection for the children and the parent is regarded as the same sentiment; and it is taken for granted that without active love for the former all our professions of love for the latter are glaring hypocrisy. "If a man say, I love God, and hate his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" That is to say, if the image of God rendered visible, brought near in one of his children has no charms for you, it is a palpable falsehood to pretend that you love that image when invisible. "By this we know that we love the children of God,

when we love God and keep his commandments." In the former case, a man professed to love God, while he had no love for his children; here one pretends that he loves the children of God, when he has no love for God. In these and other portions of the Scriptures, the sentiment of which I have been discoursing is assumed to be a new and heavenly grace. Indeed in that inventory of spiritual virtues which Peter enumerates, and which are not independent graces clustered together, but graces growing out of each other, "brotherly kindness" is the immediate fruit of "godliness." "And to godliness, brotherly kindness." There is an indefeasible connection between the two. If we truly love God, we love the brethren. If we truly love the brethren, we love God. And if we love God, we are his children; "and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ."

Men and brethren, the subject of our meditations this morning is of unspeakable moment to us all. You cannot read the New Testament without feeling that friendship for each other is called "a new commandment," because it was an unique style of love—an affection which for disinterestedness, for comprehensiveness, for considerateness, for tenderness, for confidence and kindness in spite of ingratitude and unworthiness—was something historically, ethically new. Let us therefore prize and nourish this love. The enemies of God and man are ever seeking to embitter Christians against each other; but let us yield to almost any artifice of the devil rather than this.

If love for those who are Christ's be so infallible a criterion of our piety, it is of everlasting importance that we examine whether this grace has been implanted in us by the Holy Spirit. Recall the admonitions you have heard to-day as to the danger of self-deception upon this point. Recollect that we may be strongly attached to the people of God on account of our natural relations to them; and that Christians may be regarded with esteem and affection for attributes which they possess in common with men of the world. Do we love them as Christians because they are Christians, and for qualities which are spiritual and heavenly? If they are thus dear to us,

"we know that we have passed from death unto life."—But if not, the converse is equally certain, and we know that we have not passed from death unto life; we have experienced no spiritual change; we do not love Jesus and his cause, nor is the love of God in us. No matter what the consistency of our outward life, we are in a state of impenitence and condemnation. "In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." *Abideth in death*—terrible thought! He lives, moves, has his being, eats, drinks, sleeps in death. O go, go into the graveyard yonder, open some charnel vault, take to your arms any mass of blue and reeking putrefaction there, and say "to corruption, Thou art my father, to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister;" but stay not, I charge you, stay not another moment with this dreadful doom upon you.—Abiding in death!—the death of trespasses and sins; your guilt and corruption gathering and spreading, and your soul rapidly hastening to the second, the eternal death.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Let this "brotherly love continue." "The Lord make you to increase and to abound in love one to another." The more we reflect upon the design of the Redeemer in calling a church out from the world, the more we shall feel that he intended us to cultivate this mutual affection; not only to love, but to love each other as he loved us. Our common duties, trials, conflicts, hopes, joys,—above all, the Cross around which our souls cling together—these summon us to step out of the narrow circle in which we are prone to shut ourselves up, and to open our souls to all who "love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." It is by this love that the world is to know that we are the disciples of Christ, and that we are to win the most illustrious victories. Not to love each other is to violate a command as sacred as any in the decalogue. "This commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." Nay, it is to despise and to trample under

foot that precept which ought to be dearer to us, more inviolably dear than the whole of the ten commandments, the precept which Jesus bequeathed to us with his last breath, which he has left written in his own tears and blood: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

O God, the uncreated, absolute essential Love; O Jesus, incarnate, suffering, bleeding, dying, risen, ascended, glorified Love; O Holy Spirit, author and giver of Love;—inspire us more and more with this celestial grace; that we may "be made perfect in love;" and may thus know that we have now passed from death unto life, and that soon we shall pass to glory, honor and immortality beyond the skies. God grant us this unspeakable blessing. To him be glory forever. AMEN.

Sermon Seventeenth.

CHRIST OUR PASSOVER.

[PREACHED BEFORE ADMINISTERING THE LORD'S SUPPER.]

"FOR even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."—I COR. v: 7.

THE atonement—the vicarious sufferings of the Redeemer—is the great central truth in the Gospel system. To deny this doctrine is not to misunderstand, but to reject the revelation which God has given to man. The more closely we study the Scriptures, the more clearly will we discover their divine harmony. They resemble a model of architecture in which all the members are in perfect symmetry; or rather an arch which is supported by the mutual dependence and accurate proportion of all the parts. And of that divine architecture the atonement is the foundation. Of that arch it is the keystone. Discard this doctrine and what becomes of the harmony of the divine perfections in the salvation of sinners? what is the meaning of all those passages in the sacred volume which so emphatically assert the utter insufficiency of man's righteousness, and which are so interwoven with the entire body of revealed truth, that to get rid of them we must rend the whole Bible in pieces? In a word, blot out this "faithful saying," and the exulting rapture of patriarchs, prophets, apostles in view of the amazing love of God in the gift of his Son is simply so much distempered enthusiasm; the motives to love, confidence, adoration which glow in the Christian's bosom, the glorious hopes and aspirations which cause his heart to burn within him, are a sheer, foolish delusion; the worship rendered to Jesus in heaven is blasphemy; all which constitutes the Gospel is forever gone, and a cold,

heartless theology—a religion which is no Gospel—mocks the deepest wants of the soul and plunges us into an abyss of darkness and despair.

This great fundamental doctrine it is not necessary for me to establish, standing where I now do. I thank God that you not only know its certainty, but rejoice in its celestial consolations. I design simply to offer you a commentary on our text, in which, as you perceive, the sacrifice of Calvary is taken for granted, and is illustrated by a most significant emblem—the *paschal lamb.*

I. The occasion of the Passover you all remember, and never in all the annals of human anguish, was there a more appalling tragedy.

By nine successive judgments had Jehovah warned Pharaoh and the nation who, as we are expressly informed,* participated in his cruelty, and commanded them to let the children of Israel depart; but under all these fearful experiments they hardened themselves more and more. Then came a blow which cleft the heart of that guilty people, and caused all to grow pale and stand aghast—from the monarch to the humblest of his subjects. The judgments sent upon nations, generally have a close connection with their sins,—are the recoil of their crimes. Pharaoh and his minions had slain the first-born sons of the Israelites, and now all through a whole night of horrors the destroying angel sweeps onward over the land, the thunder of his wings resounding through the troubled darkness, his eye of fire striking dismay into the stoutest spirits, and his flaming sword shedding death at every stroke. Nor let any one ask, how it can be just that the transgressions of the fathers should be visited upon their offspring? The answer to that question I leave with God. That children do suffer for the iniquities of their parents is not only a doctrine of the Bible, but a fact under our own observation. If by vice a parent poisons his blood with disease, the virus is transmitted to his descendants. If he be convicted of felony, the disgrace is entailed upon his posterity. When, then, God smites the first-born of Egypt, let us not

*1 Samuel vi: 6.

foolishly arraign his justice; let us know that the Judge of all the earth must do right; and let us tremble at the thought of sin, when we find him seeking to warn us of its heinousness by such an appeal to our deepest and tenderest affections.

But while, from the palace to the hut of the beggar, the houses of this guilty people are thus scenes of unutterable woe; while shriek after shriek pierces and shatters the silence of night; while the terror which sends a mortal agony into every soul is the more crushing because the desolating strokes are so mysterious, and none can see whence they come, none can guard against that which they cannot see, none can know where they will next fall;—behold Israel dwells in perfect safety. A thousand fall at their side and ten thousand at their right hand, but harm comes not near them. And this security is not on account of any merit in them, but because blood is sprinkled upon the doors of their houses. God commanded them to slay a lamb for each family, to take of the blood and strike it upon the two side posts and on the upper door posts of their houses. "And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt."

II. Such was the institution of the Passover. In the text and elsewhere the Holy Spirit declares that the paschal lamb was a significant type of that adorable Victim who bled on Calvary. Let us then look at this symbol and the lessons it teaches us.

Now certainly I should not unfold all the allegorical import of the passage before us, if I made no reference to the Redeemer's personal character. In the Old and New Testaments, as in all sacred and profane literature, a lamb is the emblem of innocence and meekness; and in Jesus we find a perfect incarnation of these qualities.

The paschal lamb was to be "without blemish;" and Jesus was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." For though he was "made in the likeness of men, it was only in "the *likeness* of sinful flesh;" his

preternatural conception rescuing him from the lineal taint of depravity. When announcing to Mary the mysterious birth for which she was to be honored above all women, the angel thus addressed her: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."—In all his life he could confidently challenge the scrutiny of his enemies, saying, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" and the Tempter, he affirmed, could find nothing in him. "Such an high priest became us;" for unless perfectly innocent, he could not have offered himself for us; he would have required sacrifices for himself; nor would he have left us an example that in all things we should imitate him.

The lamb, as I remarked, is also the emblem of meekness, and to this feature of the Saviour's character Isaiah refers in those touching words, "He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." Well might the apostle say, "I beseech you by the gentleness of Christ;" and our souls at once respond to that touching self-assertion, "I am meek and lowly in heart." For during all the stern vicissitudes of his weary pilgrimage on earth, how sweetly submissive is he to his Father's will. When spit upon, smitten by cruel blows, and nailed to the cross, with what majestic patience does he bear the storm of insult and derision heaped upon him; with what divine compassion does he lift his eyes to heaven for the murderers whose hands were red with his blood, whose mouths were dripping with insults and execrations.

But I will not dwell upon this view of the figure in the text, because the inspired writers insist upon it with comparatively little emphasis. Those who maintain that it is the example of Jesus which the Scriptures propose, strangely pervert the Bible. Was the paschal lamb slain as an example? Was Israel saved on that fearful night by copying an example? The paschal lamb was set apart as a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of men. By its blood

the people were rescued. And Jesus is the "Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." "We are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world." And in heaven the ransomed fall down before the Lamb, singing a new song, saying, "Thou wast slain, and thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue, and people and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests."

From the other plagues sent upon the Egyptians it is remarkable that the Jews were preserved without any prescribed expedient. On that terrible night, however, there was salvation only by a specific provision, by the sprinkling of the lamb's blood. "The blood shall be to you for a token." It is to this phenomenon the apostle refers, when he says that Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." And now observe the striking analogy between the salvation wrought upon the banks of the Nile and that finished upon Mount Calvary.

First, God said of the Passover, "It is a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt; this is that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations." And in gratitude, love, adoration should we commemorate the sacrifice of the cross, as the miracle of grace and power by which a far greater deliverance was achieved for us. Bowed down beneath a yoke heavier than that of Pharaoh, enslaved by Satan, bound hand and foot by our corruptions—such was our condition. From this we are emancipated by the glorious victim immolated on Calvary. The yoke is broken and we, like Israel, are marching onwards to the promised land, guided by God's own presence, guarded by his own right hand and stretched-out arm.

Some one may ask, Why, if God loved us and resolved to save us, was the atonement indispensable? I answer by proposing another question, Tell me, my friend, would it have been quite prudent in a Jew to neglect the simple requirement of Jehovah and amuse himself with such speculations? Suppose, while the night was draw-

ing on and his brethren were sprinkling the blood upon their doors, he had refused to obey the command, and quieted himself by saying, If we are dear to Jehovah he will not allow us to perish, he has hitherto delivered us without this useless blood, and he will now deliver us. Equally foolish and impious are all human cavils as to the necessity of the vicarious death of Jesus. Enlightened reason tells me, indeed, that it was only by such an interposition God could be just and justify the ungodly —could be a "just God and a Saviour." But I rest the matter where the Bible rests it,—upon the sovereign pleasure of Jehovah. He appointed the strange unique sacrifice for that fearful night; and for the night of fierce and terrible vengeance rushing upon this guilty world he has provided the method of deliverance. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood."

The Israelite had nothing to do with the philosophy of his salvation. Enough for him that the blood would cause the destroyer to pass over his habitation. And so the question for you and me is, not about the reasonableness, but about the truth of the heavenly proclamation. The cavils sometimes uttered against the doctrine of the Cross can, of course, possess no intrinsic force, since it is impossible for any finite intellect to comprehend this adorable "mystery of godliness;" and to a devout mind there is a sublimity, a glory in the inspired announcement of this great truth which at once rebuke the shallow flippancies of the infidel and the scoffer.

If a Hebrew had neglected to mark his house with blood, nothing—no prayers, vows, eminence for zeal and piety—could have rescued him. If Moses or Aaron had been found without this token, he would have perished. And so as to the blood of Christ. In fact, let the substitution of such a Being be admitted as a Scripture truth, and we feel, at once, that it must be the only ground of salvation; the very thought of combining the imperfections of human merit with the work of the "Brightness of the Father's glory" shocks us as

the height of folly and impiety. The atonement by Jesus is a complete satisfaction to the justice of God; "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Nothing is left for man but, with a penitential faith and lively gratitude, to embrace this great salvation. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." "The blood shall be to you for a token." While the strong-winged angel of death was sweeping through the land of Egypt, there was but a single shelter. The Israelite must abide in the house sprinkled with blood. And, from first to last, our only hope is in the blood of Jesus. If we are pardoned, it is by his blood; "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace." If we are justified, it is by his blood; "Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." If we are sanctified, it is by his blood; "Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." If we are redeemed, it is by his blood; "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot." If we are brought into communion with God, it is by his blood. "Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." If we have constant access, in delightful confidence, to the Father, it is by his blood. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." If we triumph over our spiritual enemies, it is by his blood; "They overcame by the blood of the Lamb." If our robes are ever made white, it must be by blood; "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." In short, over the entire earth, wherever fallen humanity is dif-

fused, "without shedding of blood there is no remission;" and over the whole heaven, wherever glorified humanity is found, the hosanna which fills the golden atmosphere is this, "Unto him who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

You see then the first striking resemblance between the Passover and the atonement by Jesus, and that the great deliverance in each case was, and is, entirely by blood. But now, while the paschal blood thus sheltered the people of Israel, it is evident that there was no inherent virtue in the blood itself. A child perceives that between the staining of a door with the blood of a lamb, and the delivery from the terrible vengeance shed fast and far through the land there was no natural connection, no such relation as that of physical cause and effect. The Hebrew was safe only because God had appointed the blood as a token. And in this fact we find a second truth as to the great atonement.

There is no natural relation between the tragical scene upon Calvary and our salvation; the connection is entirely moral, and the efficacy of the sacrifice is owing to the sovereign will and appointment of the Deity. Hence the blood of the cross is styled "the blood of the covenant." Whether on that eventful night any Israelite should be passed over, and by what interposition, rested with the sovereign Governor of the universe; and just so as to the adorable substitution in our behalf. None but the supreme Moral Ruler could dispense with the penalty of the law and lay our iniquities upon another. We are saved "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, *whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.*" The Scriptures everywhere ascribe the scheme of redemption to the wisdom of the Infinite Mind, to the counsels of eternal wisdom and love. Jesus is "the Lamb of God"—the victim provided by God. He is the "Lamb foreordained before the foundation of the world;" "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world." He "gave himself for our sins, according to the will of God and our Father." "In this was mani-

fested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might have life through him." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

The third truth suggested by the emblem in the text has reference to our agency in the salvation provided by the Gospel; and it is this—that, though Jesus has finished a full atonement for sin, we can derive no benefit unless that atonement be cordially accepted by us.

Suppose an Israelite had slain his lamb, but refused or neglected to sprinkle the blood upon his house; he would have been destroyed; nor would any plea have availed him. And we are constantly admonished by the inspired writers that this is true as to the salvation of the Gospel.

Vainly as to us did Jesus stoop to earth, and clothe himself in mortal flesh, and become obedient unto death even the death of the cross, if his blood be not applied to our souls. Abundant, redundant is the efficacy of that imperial atonement; but it is only for those who open their hearts to the great doctrine and humbly accept the great salvation. If you ask me, what is the act, on our part, which corresponds to the sprinkling of blood upon the door of the house, the sacred oracles tell you that it is faith, faith in Jesus. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "Through faith he kept the passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them." "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood."

If you require me to be more explicit and define this faith, I point you to the conduct of the Hebrew on that awful night. Tell me, who would mark his dwelling with the blood? Would it be the man who did not firmly believe all that Jehovah had declared, but said, There is no danger; or, if there be, I shall escape without any such precaution? No. It would be he who was persuaded that all which the Lord had threatened and promised he would most surely perform, and who, submitting his reason to the divine veracity, was willing

to take God at his word, and to adore the grace which so mercifully provided a way of escape. And, now, this is the very faith by which we are saved. As an evidence of Abraham's faith it is said, "Being not weak in faith, *he considered not.*" He dismissed from his thoughts all the suggestions of mere sense and reason. Saving faith is a firm belief in the solemn warnings of the Bible as to the destruction one day to overwhelm a guilty world; a flying for refuge to the hope set before us in the Gospel; a deep conviction of sin and helplessness; and a reposing the soul, with all its concerns, upon the atonement as the heaven-ordained, and, therefore, immovable foundation of safety.

I have time to mention only one other lesson, and a lesson of unspeakable blessedness conveyed by this emblem of the Passover. I mean the perfect security of all who receive the great salvation achieved by the sufferings of the Lamb of God.

Come with me a moment, and let us look at the houses of these Egyptians. First, observe this magnificent structure, so vast in its proportions, and adorned with such splendors of architectural glory. It is the royal palace. Then, those imposing mansions, almost rivalling the palace in ample dimensions, in wealth of grandeur and beauty. They are the castles of the princes and nobles, or the abodes of men illustrious for genius, learning, wide domains, deeds of exalted patriotism, or heroic achievements in arms. Turning from these aristocratic edifices, cast your eye over the diversified, crowded dwellings of the teeming population. Not one of these homes but shall this night be converted into a tomb, an Abel-Mizraim resounding with bitter cries and lamentations.

Having thus surveyed these abodes, visit a very different class of dwellings. They are in the suburbs, the proscribed purlieus of the cities and villages. In appearance they are utterly mean, the hovels of bondsmen; and, moreover, in the sight of God, their inmates are sinners justly deserving the same doom which is about to descend upon the Egyptians. Yet not near one of these humble cabins shall the flaming sword approach.

No doubt in the midst of those dismal scenes which caused the night to appear as if it were an age, the tenants of these obscure roofs were agitated by conflicting emotions. One, as he hears the shrieks rending the air, exclaims, "God be merciful to me a sinner, I am lost; the blood may do for others, but I am undone; my conscience tells me I can look for nothing except fiery indignation to consume me and my house." Another cries, "Ah, the blood has efficacy; it is, however, only for those who have a strong faith. For me, my faith is gone; Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." A third falls in terror on his face, and with promises, and vows, and tears, supplicates the divine mercy; "Oh, spare me, and the remnant of my days shall be devoted to thy service." While a fourth rises above these unworthy fears, and, strong in faith, staggers not but gives glory to God. He looks neither at his past, nor present, nor future life, but simply at the blood and God's promise made to that blood. "There it is. I, therefore, will not,—I cannot be alarmed. God is my refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble, therefore will not I fear though a thousand messengers of death should desolate every hearth around me and drench the land in blood." Such may be the different feelings of the Israelites; but whatever their emotions, they are safe for all that. It is not their fears and doubts and lamentations that are going to destroy them; nor is it their peace and joy which are going to save them. They are spared because the blood is on the door. Upon *that*, not upon *them*, the minister of vengeance looks and passes them over.

And now all this finds its exact analogy in our salvation through the blood of Christ. Christians are called "God's house," "God's building." They may be and generally are humble and obscure in their position. "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and

things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence." In God's presence now, and in his presence at the day of judgment, the Christian can glory in nothing that he is or has done. He glories, and through eternity will glory only in the cross of Christ. It is this which distinguishes him from all other men, from the most moral as widely as from the most vicious—this, that his only confidence is in a crucified Redeemer. Guilty, self-condemned, confessing his utter and unutterable unworthiness, he points to the blood of Jesus as the token for his salvation, and rests all his hope upon its efficacy to blot out the sentence of sin against him, and to subdue the power of sin within him.

At times, especially as he thinks of death, he may be oppressed by misgivings and apprehensions. He may write bitter things against himself, and fear that his repentance, faith, hope are not genuine. The consciousness of his remaining corruptions, the remembrance of his unfaithfulness, the sense of weakness may tempt him to despair; but, when ceasing to take counsel in his own heart and to find sorrow in such legal thoughts—he turns to the cross, "the blood is for a token to him." Suppose on that frightful night a Hebrew, deploring his sin, had exclaimed, "No, this blood cannot save me." And suppose some one had said to him, "Well, go and wash it off then." What would have been his feelings? With what dismay and horror would he not have revolted at the very thought. Just so with the believer in Jesus. Gloomy he may be; cast down by fears, doubts, spiritual depression; but for worlds would he not give up his hope in the precious blood of the atonement.

Yes, they are safe, forever safe, to whose souls that blood has been applied. "Go through the midst of the city and smite; let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity, but come not near any man on whom is the mark;" —such was the command when the slaughtering weapon was about to flash like lightning through the doomed city; and such is now the irrevocable proclamation of heaven. I know there are those who deny the divinity

of the Redeemer, and, of course, they have no faith in his piacular sacrifice; but no one who receives this glorious truth can doubt the imperial efficacy of such an amazing substitution. The conviction is instinctive and irresistible, that nothing less than a full and perfect satisfaction to the claims of eternal justice could be the result of the incarnation and death of the Son of God. And, fixing our adoring faith upon the cross, we triumphantly exclaim, "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son cleanseth us from all sin;" "Whom he justified, them also he glorified;" "God commendeth his love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; much more, then, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For, if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

In conclusion let me ask each of you whether this blood is upon your door as a token for you? Have you, under a deep sense of sin, and in view of the wrath to come, received a crucified Jesus into your heart, and committed your soul to his keeping? He is "the Lamb of God," God's Lamb. The Supreme Authority has provided and offered the magnificent victim. All that he requires is that,—ceasing to insult him, and to insure your own perdition by seeking any other medium of salvation—you accept the inestimable donation, and yield your hearts and lives to the influence of that gratitude and loyalty which such a sacrifice for you ought naturally to inspire.

Some, alas, too many of you have long been careless, in spite of all our tears and entreaties. My dear hearers, what is to become of you? How shall you escape if you neglect so great salvation? Delude yourselves no more with insidious self-flattery that you respect religion and hope and intend, one day, to be Christians. All this is only as if an Israelite had omitted to sprinkle the door, and quieted his fears by persuading himself that he respected the blood and purposed, at some future day, to obey the voice of God.

Recollect that the Passover had a significance for some others besides the people of God. It was a terrible token to Pharaoh. It sealed him over to destruction. And if you perish, it will not be because you have sinned, but because you have no faith in the blood of Christ; because year after year, and now again this day, when we commemorate that most astonishing and touching deed of love, you treat with contempt the propitiation which God has provided at such an expense. "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God and hath counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing?" If God threatens, it is that he wills not your death; it is that fear may effect a breach in your heart through which faith and love may gain entrance. Your condemnation will be your own choice.—God is mercifully and loudly calling, entreating all to embrace the salvation he freely offers. If then, the coming tempest of vengeance fall upon you, it will be all your own unbelief and obstinacy.

Christians, how delightful to contemplate such a salvation and feel that it is yours, yours indefeasibly and forever. You can say, "Christ, *my* passover, is sacrificed for *me*." Here is a spectacle which may well absorb all the immortal capacities of our minds, and inflame the most ardent passions of our souls. Here, with the angels, we may expatiate upon the wonders of that masterpiece of wisdom, power and goodness which finds no parallel in the whole moral universe. Here we may lose ourselves in the heights and depths of a love which passeth knowledge; may admire and adore the harmony of all the divine perfections; may exult in the full assurance that all our sins shall be passed over, that our security is beyond the reach of earth or hell, and that abundant provision has been made for all our wants. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

This morning we are going to receive the emblems which remind us of the adorable victim who poured out his soul unto death for our sins. After the paschal lamb

had been slain, the Israelites were commanded to roast the flesh and to eat it. Through blood and fire the sacrifice must pass before it could become food; and by what a terrible ordeal of blood and fiery wrath was our Passover consecrated that we might feed on him by faith.—Let us eat this Passover with gratitude, with the blood of Christ warm in our hearts, with a confidence and love blooming afresh in our souls. Let us eat it, remembering the ties which are created by this blood. Now, at least, let us recall those words uttered when the supper was instituted. "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you that ye also love one another." Whatever differences of opinions or feelings may have existed among the Israelites, all were forgotten when they sat down to a repast vividly recalling their common danger and such a deliverance. Let us banish from this scene all bitterness, wrath, anger, malice, strife; forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us; and let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, but with the new leaven of sincerity, truth, forbearance, brotherly kindness and charity. Let us partake of this supper with joy. Trouble and sorrow may come upon us, and all may seem dark and pitchy as that night which settled upon Egypt; but the blood is there, and blood is God's own oath and pledge to me.—Although my house be not so with God; although my purposes be broken off, my prospects blighted, my hopes and affections withered, and my skies hung in sackcloth, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. Lastly, in receiving these symbols of the flesh and blood of him "who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works"—let us yield ourselves to the influences which the contemplation of such an amazing transaction ought habitually to exert over our characters and lives. While ascribing our salvation entirely to this interposition of sovereign grace and thus abasing all our pride, let us arm ourselves with fresh resolutions, in God's strength, to triumph over our selfishness and corruption; to repay such devotion to us with the devotion of all our souls; and, with heart for heart, zeal for zeal, sacrifice for sacri-

fice, to consecrate ourselves "unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father." O for a Christ not only on the cross without, but on the cross within; a Christ to deliver us not only from guilt, but from corruption; a Christ not only seen but felt; a Christ not only represented by these outward emblems of his precious blood, but realized by the purifying, rejoicing efficacy of that blood upon our souls.

Sermon Eighteenth.

SIMEON'S FAITH AND CONSOLATION.

"AND behold there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon: and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Ghost was upon him, and it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."—LUKE ii: 25-30.

"WHAT shall I do then with Jesus?"—I addressed you recently upon that question. You are everywhere in contact with Jesus; and he appeals to every noble, generous, tender feeling in your nature. You must do something with him. And behold in our text faith's answer to that enquiry. What shall I do then with Jesus? Faith takes Jesus up in its arms. Though he is thus despoiled of all the equipage of his glory, and appears to be only an obscure Hebrew child, faith takes him up in its arms, in the arms of love, gratitude, adoring confidence, and blesses God for his unspeakable gift. I say *faith;* for it is of Simeon's faith I am going to speak; and then of the consolations of that faith. Honor me with all your attention.

I. The *faith* of Simeon. There have been some disputes, some very learned discussions, in which theologians have undertaken to determine who Simeon was; elaborate arguments proving nothing; decisions pronounced with great confidence upon no grounds whatever. I have read

them, but I have forgotten them. I am not here to entertain you with legends and fictions.

All we know is, that he was one of those devout men who "waited for the consolation of Israel,"—that is, for the Messiah, who, it would be easy to demonstrate, was predicted by this title. With reference to him Isaiah uttered those exulting strains, "Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth, and break forth into singing, O mountains, for the Lord hath comforted his people;" "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God; speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned."—Indeed to this day, "Consolation" and "the year of consolation" are terms applied by the Jews to the Messiah and his advent.

But, now, this very fact shews how strong was Simeon's faith, how entirely it was "of the operation of God;" for Simeon was a Jew, and you know what was the consolation which the Jews expected in their Messiah. Never did there glow in the bosom of a nation such a lofty ambition, never did there burn in the human breast such high and glorious aspirations. The coming of Shiloh was the theme which caused the hearts of patriarchs, living and dying, to run over with the fullness of their joy; which fired the spirit of prophets with unutterable rapture; and in prospect of which pious kings were stirred with holy impatience; nor could all regal appliances appease the longing of their souls for the fulfillment of that promise. He was to be "the glory of his people Israel," —their magnificent deliverer. Prosperity had no happiness which was not augmented, adversity could bring no gloom which was not cheered by the inspiring assurance of a day when Salem should sit as a queen among the nations, and should wield a sceptre of universal empire.

At the period of time to which our text refers, these hopes so earnestly clung to for ages, had been kindled into irrepressible enthusiasm by the aggravated wrongs under which the nation groaned, and by the convergence of all the prophecies to that epoch as the time when Zion should arise from the dust, and her fetters be as

tow in the fire, and her chains be broken like threads from her arms.

The Romans had overwhelmed them—*them*, Jehovah's chosen people; and on all sides they saw the humiliating badges of their degradation. The only coin permitted as a circulating medium had Cæsar's image and superscription upon it; so that a Jew could not go to market and purchase food for himself and little ones without being reminded of his subjugation. Marching over the holy land, traversing the streets of their sacred city, day and night, were hordes of their haughty conquerors. The Roman publicans were incessantly at their doors, extorting fraudulent and exorbitant taxes from those who had once received tribute of all the surrounding nations; and at the very gates of the temple an Italian band scowled upon them, as they passed to worship the God of their fathers. Accustomed to regard himself as the peculiar favorite of heaven and elevated far above all the rest of mankind, to a Jew the Romans were only barbarians, idolators, with whom even the common intercourse of life would be a pollution. And now to be trampled under foot by their mailed heels!—never perhaps in the history of the world did a captive nation endure the yoke with such mutinous hate, such detestation and loathing, such an inextinguishable thirst for revenge.

Oh, but there was "consolation for Israel." Messiah would arise to dash in pieces this abhorred foreign despotism, and his advent was near at hand. The people were now to be gathered unto Shiloh. He would be "an ensign to the nation," around which millions of swords were waiting to leap from their scabbards; and there was not a Hebrew boy thirteen years of age, who had heard from his mother's lips the story of Israel's glory and who saw around him the monuments of Israel's wrongs, who would not rush to battle and welcome death in such a cause as a bridegroom welcomes his bride. Yes, *The Erkomenos*—the imperial hero of all those hopes, desires, ambitions which had been transmitted from sire to son and had cheered them under oppression and tyranny—he was now about to appear and to marshal the hosts who thronged to crown him and to follow his triumphant ban-

ner until he should, not only scourge their proud invaders from the soil they profaned, but should thunder at the gate of Rome itself for indemnification and vengeance.

Enter, my brethren, into these thoughts. Consider how, from infancy down to grey hairs, Simeon had shared these national aspirations; and then reflect upon his faith as it is illustrated in the narrative before us. We are not surprised at the homage which the shepherds rendered to the child, for an angel proclaimed to them the glory of that birth; nor at the adoration of the wise men of the east, for a star heralded them to Bethlehem. But no celestial messenger, no miraculous phenomenon had prepared the mind of Simeon for the manifestation which breaks in upon his vision. "It was revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." Revolving in his thoughts this promise, we represent him to ourselves as cherishing the sublimest conceptions of that Being who was to be disclosed, as expecting all the pomp of a regal coronation;—his imagination warmed, his very dreams glowing with vague but magnificent presages of that august monarch who is about to ascend the throne of David. Instead of this, what do we see? We behold him with a poor infant in his arms, and worshipping that humble child as the object of those glorious predictions, as the consummation of those exalted hopes and aspirations which had burned for ages in the heart of the nation, and had been hallowed in his own breast, during a long life by all the fervor of patriotism, all the intensity of religion.

He is in the temple. He "came by the Spirit into the temple;" and whenever we enter the temple under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it is that we may see Jesus. A divine intimation led him into the sanctuary to see his Messiah. God had declared by his prophet Haggai, that "this house should be filled with his glory," and that "the glory of this latter house should be greater than that of the former," because "the Desire of all nations" should come there. What must be the majesty, the divinity of a visitant whose presence will cast such glory over this inferior structure, that it shall eclipse all the

gorgeous splendor of Solomon's temple. How will he come? What shall be the sign of his coming? In what form will he burst forth like the sun in his noonday brightness and illumine all the place? And who will be his retinue? What brilliant array can form a procession dazzling enough for such a reception?

There he is. That is he. And these are his retinue. Two obscure Israelites enter in the ordinary way of poor people, bringing a babe to be dedicated. But no sooner do Simeon's eyes meet them than all his soul catches fire within him, his spirit exults and magnifies the Lord, and he takes the child up in his arms, wondering, rejoicing, adoring.

In this light the faith of the holy man is astonishing. It becomes more marvellous when we recollect another fact; I mean his great age.

This remark will at once strike those who have reflected at all upon the physiology of the human constitution, and the close intelligence and sympathy which exist between the soul that thinks and the body with which that soul is united. We are not all spirit, and the reception of truth depends greatly upon the temperament of that matter which enters so largely into our composition.—With advancing years—after we have reached a certain period—the brain becomes dull, the animal spirits vapid and languid, the energies inert; so that upon the aged new impressions are made with great difficulty, and old sentiments are retained with great obstinacy. Hence, the old love to talk of former days, and objects cherished in early life are constantly recurring and renewing their traces in the memory and the heart.

But we need not be philosophers to feel the force of this observation. In everything, especially in religious faith and practice, it has got to be an axiom, that any conversion of the aged is a miracle. The heart is hardened, the conscience is stupefied, the sensibilities are obtuse, pride of opinion is inveterate; prejudices are rooted—their ramifications becoming entwined about the very foundations of character; above all, old hereditary sanctities of birth, education, family, country, church,

repel and resent every suggestion of change. Now, apply all this to Simeon. He is so aged that he is looking for death every day, and is only detained until he shall see the Messiah. During a protracted life he had nourished no hope so dear as this. He "waited for the consolation of Israel." He only lingers that his fading vision may be blest with a sight of the princely deliverer promised to his people, the illustrious assertor of the glory which had departed from Judah. Yet he rises above these venerable aspirations, these intense attachments, and triumphs in the spiritual reign which that child is about to inaugurate. And this change is wrought not gradually, but at once. At the very first glance the infant is transfigured before him, and in the son of Mary his faith sees the Son of God.

In this aspect how superior was his faith to that of John the Baptist, who—after all that had been revealed to him, when removed from his inspiring work, baffled in his high-wrought expectations of Christ's kingdom, and pining in a dungeon,—begins to feel some morbid doubts creep into his soul; how superior to the faith of the apostles, who,—even after his resurrection—asked Jesus if he would now "restore the temporal kingdom to Israel?" Indeed it is very remarkable that not only Simeon, but the woman of Samaria and other Sycharites whose confession of faith is recorded in the fourth chapter of John's Gospel, and the ancient prophets—though not comprehending "what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory which should follow"—entertained views, discernments of the kingdom of heaven, more spiritual than those reached by the Saviour's own disciples before the day of Pentecost. The Samaritans said "we know that this is indeed the Christ the Saviour of the world," while the Apostles clung to the narrow unworthy anticipations of a national deliverer. Daniel foretold that Messiah should be cut off, but not for himself." When, however, this truth was announced to the twelve, Peter exclaimed. "Be it far from thee, Lord, this thing shall not be unto thee." Isaiah declared that he should be "despised and rejected

of men," that he would be "led as a lamb to the slaughter;" but the apostles were ever intriguing for the most distinguished honors of his royal court. When he was arrested and condemned, they "all forsook him and fled; and after the crucifixion, two disciples, on their way to Emmaus—expressing the sentiments of all—uttered those words of despair, "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel."

You cannot have followed me thus far without feeling how strong was Simeon's faith. Take now a second characteristic in that faith. I refer to its appropriating energy, the eagerness with which it receives and embraces "the Gift of God."

Though a light from heaven had shone around them, though an angel had communicated the glad tidings to them, and a multitude of the heavenly host had ravished their souls with melodious anthems—the shepherds satisfy themselves by gazing upon the child, and spreading abroad the strange things they had seen and heard. "And it came to pass as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning the child." Blazing in the western sky, an orb of living fire had been the harbinger of the magi. Yet when they approach the consecrated cradle, awe and wonder hold them in mute and reverent adoration. They "fell down and worshipped, and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts, gold, and frankincense and myrrh."

How different the conduct of Simeon. Inspired with love, joy, ecstasy, nothing can keep him from clasping to his heart the divine treasure. The young and lovely mother is folding to her bosom her infant, dear as her first-born, dearer still for the sweet mysteries of his birth; and he—a stranger—what right has he to take him from her embrace? No such question enters the mind of this venerable man; for in that child he beholds

the incarnation of celestial blessings for the human race. Upon Mary had been conferred the unspeakable honor of being the "virgin who should conceive and bring forth a son;" but that son is "Jesus the Saviour," "Emmanuel, God with us," "The Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." He is "the Mercy promised to the fathers," the Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of his people Israel." In him Simeon sees "The Salvation of God," "the Consolation of Israel." It is his Redeemer, his life, his hope, his joy, his "all and in all;" and he takes him up in his arms, and blesses God, and magnifies the riches of grace and love thus amazingly impersonated.

And this suggests the only other trait I can now notice in the faith of this patriarchal servant of God, which is its evangelical character. It was the genuine faith of the Gospel.

What is evangelical faith? It is the grace which renounces all saving merit in our own works. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." Such was the faith of Simeon. The highest encomium is passed upon his eminent virtue. He "was just,"—a man of integrity and uprightness; but not in his good deeds, in Jesus alone is his confidence and hope.

What is evangelical faith? It is the grace which renounces all saving worth not only in our good works, but in the most conscientious performance of our religious duties. Such was Simeon's faith. He "was devout."—He was scrupulous in every observance required by the Jewish ritual. "Touching the righteousness which is in the law, he was blameless. But it is only in the righteousness of Jesus that he finds pardon and justification.

"Mine eyes have seen thy SALVATION;"—ponder these remarkable words. With Simeon, Jesus and salvation are the same thing. Beholding Jesus, he beholds God's salvation—the full, free, only salvation provided for guilty man. Did Simeon, then, have any conception of the atonement and the sacrifice by which that atonement was to be made? Certainly. Besides what I have just said of the import of the word "salvation," his language

to Mary is conclusive upon this point. "And Simeon blessed them and said unto Mary, his mother, Behold this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against; *yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also.*" What this "sword" was, we can be at no loss to understand; but who can comprehend the anguish of that mother when the cruel iron entered her soul? Some of you have known what it is to "mourn and to be in bitterness for your first-born," falling honorably on the field in a cause you deemed sacred. Many of us have felt our very hearts cleft in twain when a child has died in our arms, with all the ministries which the tenderest love could apply to soothe its sufferings. What, then, must have been the agonies of Mary when she saw her first-born son,—and such a son,—one who even amidst the tortures of his crucifixion was still thinking of her comfort, turning his eyes to her and confiding her to the care of his beloved disciple,—what pangs must have pierced her soul as she saw this son seized by ruffians, buffeted, mocked, spit upon, bending under the weight of the cross, dragged through the streets by an infuriated rabble, with curses and execrations, and then nailed to that cross, and expiring by a death from the very thought of which the imagination recoils in horror. By the "sword" Simeon meant the violent and bloody death which Mary should witness. In that mysterious child he saw the victim who would offer himself to divine justice as a satisfaction for the sins of his people.

II. This must suffice for our first article. In the time left us I would glance at our remaining topic,—the *consolations* of Simeon's faith. He waited for "the consolation of Israel;" and, with Jesus in his arms, his soul exults in the full fruition of that consolation; he rejoices in that child with "joy unspeakable and full of glory."

The Father of the faithful had known something of this consolation. "Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." Standing before the altar upon which Isaac was stretched, there streamed upon his vision some prophetic glimpses of another altar which

was to be erected on that very spot, and of the amazing sacrifice to be there immolated. Moriah caught some rays of that light which one day would crown the top of Calvary, and become a Pisgah from which Abraham fixed his earnest eyes upon the prospect, and gloried in the sight.

To Moses there had been vouchsafed some foretastes of that consolation. Admitted to the closest and tenderest communion with God, he exclaimed, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. And, hiding him in the cleft of a rock, and covering him with his hand—an emblem of the shelter found in a wounded Saviour—Jehovah revealed some fore-shinings of the great salvation in which attributes that seem utterly to conflict are harmonized, in which he is just and yet justifies the ungodly, merciful without clearing the guilty. "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, *forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and will by no means clear the guilty.*"

But Simeon rejoices in the fullness of the consolation. "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord," said the aged Israel. "I have seen thy salvation," is the language of the aged Simeon. Patriarchs and prophets had "died in faith not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off;" this venerable saint holds in his arms that child who was the consummation of all the promises and now what can he desire more? What has life to detain him longer? He waited to see Jesus; he presses Jesus to his heart. Earth has nothing more to give, heaven nothing more to promise; and in the delight, the entrancing happiness of a soul which at last possesses the long-desired object of its prayers and adorations, he exclaims, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for my eyes have seen thy salvation."

These words are generally regarded as a prayer—"Now let thy servant depart!" but the original does not allow any such construction. The language is very different from a prayer. It is the triumphant ejaculation of one

whose devoutest prayer has been granted. The verb is in the indicative mood stating the fact that he is now allowed to depart; but the indicative is here really more than the imperative. It is the rejoicing cry of a prisoner who has been set free—of one who during long years had been desiring to depart, and who now sees all for which he had been detained on earth accomplished and his release perfected.

Two instances will at once occur to your minds in which the very same sentiment, though in a different form, was uttered by aged men, in the joy, the repose, the perfect satisfaction of their hearts at the accomplishment of their warmest wishes. I refer to Jacob and Barzillai.

For twenty years had Jacob believed that Joseph was dead. For twenty years had he gone weeping all his days for a son in whom his life had been wrapped up, refusing to be comforted, and uttering that sad lamentation, "I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning." Suddenly he receives the glad tidings from Egypt, "good news from a far country" which are "as cold waters to a thirsty soul," and he cries out, "It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive, I will go down and see him before I die." "And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel, his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him, and he fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while. And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive."

The other case is that of Barzillai. During David's banishment from his kingdom, this prince had warmly espoused his cause and supplied his wants. When recalled to the throne and on his way to Jerusalem, the monarch is anxious to confer honors on his faithful subject, and presses him to return with him. But Barzillai declines, pleading his age. "Thy servant will go a little way over Jordan with the king;" and Chimham his son will proceed to the capital, but for himself what charms can a court have for him? It is enough that he sees the prince so dear to his heart again restored; let him go home that he may die there.

You feel how natural was this deadness to the world in these two patriarchal men; but you feel, too, with how much deeper emphasis Simeon might utter the sentiment in our text. Rejoicing as was the sight of Joseph, what was it to the vision of the Messiah—the object of such ardent hopes and aspirations? It was the infirmities, the insensibilities of a man stricken in years, and his nearness to the grave which Barzillai pleaded for renouncing the world; Simeon had long been thus weaned from all the pleasures and promises of life, but now there is added a more powerful motive. Faith has revealed that Being, one glimpse of whom turns the whole world into contempt. Before his eyes, in his very arms is the dear object of all of his loving, longing, waiting; and he has nothing more to do with terrestrial things. It is enough. My soul hath her content so absolute, that now to die is now to be most blessed. My eyes have nothing more to see, my ears nothing more to hear, my heart has nothing more to desire.

But to regard Simeon's language in this view is not to exhaust its meaning. In the original the expression is very significant; it is the triumphant exclamation of a hope full of immortality. "Lord now deliverest thou thy servant in peace and tranquility." He welcomes death as the emancipation of his imprisoned soul. "Let me go home that I may die," said the Gileadite. "Now lettest thou me die," exclaimed Simeon, "that I may go home." With Jesus in his arms, he possesses his passport to immortal blessedness. "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law;" but here is the propitiation, the redeeming sacrifice. "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." The darkness of the tomb is appalling; but here is "the Light" which dissipates all that gloom, and irradiates the grave with celestial brightness.

I wish I had time to dwell longer on the picture presented in this text. An old man with Jesus in his arms!—the angels who left the shepherds and went up, must have returned to view the sight; for heaven had nothing more worthy of their tender sympathy. And let me add that devils can find in hell no spectacle more

gratifying to their malignity than that which we every day behold; an old man tottering on the brink of eternity, spurning the love of Jesus, and clasping the world in his arms as his portion and consolation. But I must hasten to a conclusion, and I finish by applying the subject practically to this audience.

Men and brethren, we have been considering Simeon's faith, and have found that it renounced all merit in himself, and embraced Jesus as the only and perfect salvation; is this our faith? As to the hope of winning heaven by the righteousness of the law, I do not feel it necessary to speak; for none of you I believe, are indulging that delusion. In the early part of my ministry, I often used to set myself to expose this heresy; but latterly I have never touched it; and for the simple reason, that it does not seem to me there is any danger from this quarter. At least after preaching to you and being familiar with you for more than fifteen years, I have never met a single man or woman who had any intention of being saved by a life of perfect holiness. What I have to lament is, that so many of you appear to regard the righteousness of Christ as superseding the necessity of any righteousness of your own. Simeon was eminent for his virtues and graces, and, appealing to God, he calls himself "thy servant;" yet he reposed entirely on the complete salvation which is in Jesus. Is this our character and our confidence? Balaam could wish to "die the death of the righteous;" is ours the faith which causes us to live the life of the righteous, and yet in view of the judgment, to say, "That I may be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith?"

Simeon's soul was filled with peace and joy because the eyes of his understanding being enlightened, he embraced the Saviour in the arms of faith. "The Holy Ghost was upon him;" and it is the office of the Spirit to "glorify Jesus," to take of his fullness, grace, love, and shew them unto us. Has Jesus been thus "revealed in" us? Have we thus embraced him? He is "the gift of God;" have we received him as such? He is

the Saviour of sinners;—"this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;" do we feel ourselves lost and ruined, and have we accepted the great salvation, as that which is suited to all the fearful emergencies of our condition?

"He took him up in his arms, and blessed God." O; but faith has wonderful arms. Winning arms; "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."

Clinging arms; Jacob gets but one gripe on him, and vainly is his thigh weakened, vainly does the mysterious Being say, "Let me go, for the day breaketh;" halt or whole, daybreak, noon, or night, he will not let him go without a blessing. Loving arms; "To you that believe he is precious." Enriching arms; for they gather all "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Adopting arms; "As many as receive him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." In a word, let faith only get Jesus in its arms, and it has him who "is all and in all," the pledge of all, the sum of all which the soul can need for time and eternity; "he is made of God unto us, wisdom righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

We have spoken, however, not only of Simeon's faith, but of his "consolation." Has faith shed this consolation into our souls? Learnedly and accurately we can explain all the doctrines of the Gospel; but have we light in our heart as well as in our head? "The Consolation of Israel,"—not of the Jews, but of all the true Israel of God,—this is his title, and well does he deserve it. At what time a poor soul, overwhelmed by conviction, is crying, "Lord, save, or I perish;" when gloom and night overshadow us, and our hearts are cast down within us; when fainting through weakness; when in heaviness through manifold temptations; when sorrow and anguish take hold upon us, and our moisture is turned into the drought of summer; when not only without, but within, the fig tree blossoms not, and there is no fruit in the vine," when we walk in darkness and see no

light,—then what is the whole world to us? what can the whole world do for us? then, how ineffably consoling it is to look to Jesus, to say to him, "Thou art my hiding place, thou shalt preserve me from trouble, thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance;" then, how do all our fears and doubts vanish away, and peace, assurance, joy, flow into our souls, as we feel that Jesus is in our arms, as, with the heavenly spouse we "hold him and will not let him go." Or rather, it is he who holds us, and will not let us go. For if we love him, it is because he first loved us; if we choose him, it is because he first chose us; if our arms are around him, it is because his arms were first around us,—the arms of his love, of his sovereign, sustaining, unchangeable, everlasting love. And as he whispers, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thine iniquities for my name's sake," we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; we exultingly exclaim, O, love of Christ which passeth knowledge! "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

My brethren, I trust that this preciousness of Jesus is to you not a speculation, but an experience. After all, however, we will never enter into all the import of Simeon's consolation and song until, like him, we are about to bid adieu to life forever. No matter what may be the sweetness of those hidden joys which are now diffused into our hearts, as we feel that our Beloved is ours and we are his, it is only in a dying hour that we can fully know the peace and blessedness of seeing and embracing the adorable Redeemer of our souls. When the time of our deliverance shall be at hand, when the world shall be receding from our sight, and heaven shall be opening upon our vision,—then we will begin to comprehend what it is to be Christ's, to clasp Jesus to our bosoms, and to feel his everlasting arms around us; then, and not until then, can our souls rise to all the rapture of Paul in his glowing desire "to depart," and of Simeon when he ex-

claimed, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

My poor impenitent hearers, what will become of you in that solemn hour? Without Christ, you are without hope or consolation now, and how terrible to you the fast approaching hour of your departure. What will you do then without Jesus? What will become of you? Who will welcome your soul in eternity? God is my record how I long after you. O, if there be any consolation in Christ, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, come to this Saviour and accept the blessedness he waits to give you.

Christians, remember the title of him who is the strength of your heart and your portion forever. He is "the Consolation of Israel;" this is his name; let this name make him increasingly dear to you. "God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us." What wonderful words of assurance are these. May they ever dwell in our hearts richly by faith. May the consolations of Christ abound in us now; may they superabound in the last closing hour.

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, which hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolations and a good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." To him be glory forever. AMEN.

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